

THE REVIVAL OF EARLY LITERATURE IN ENGLAND AND SCOTLAND
FROM PERCY TO SCOTT 1765-1802

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I have used "early literature" to include all works up to the early Elizabethans, except for the ballads, where I have had to be more liberal. Macpherson and Chatterton have been excluded, as have song books and chap books. The study is limited to England and Scotland, as the treatment of the Celtic literature of Ireland and Wales is a wholly different subject. I have frequently distorted logical arrangement in order to make the chronological effect as vivid as possible.

I

Introductory

The history of the revival of early literature in the eighteenth century is not the record of a list of publications which gradually brought knowledge and appreciation where ignorance and contempt had been the rule. The reasons for the wholesale neglect of early literature were deep and intricate, and the change which finally abolished those reasons was correspondingly complex. The change was not a mere addition to the amount of knowledge, though that enters in; nor can it be explained by the vague mention of that portmanteau word Romanticism, which is usually taken to explain all eighteenth century literary anomalies. The disparagement of the poetry of earlier centuries was a natural corollary to the philosophy of the age applied to the history of literature. For early literature to come into its own, it was not enough that it be resurrected; the whole general literary attitude had to change, or the newly revealed literature of the past would be still-born. The revival, by one of those accidental, but inevitable coincidences, so frequent in literary history, was an active ingredient in bringing on the fundamental change that enabled it to survive.

The revival of early literature, as in all rediscoveries of literary periods, was a combination of new knowledge and new appreciation. Usually the two phases are so interlocked that it is difficult to determine which gives the first impetus, but in this case, where the early stages of the movement were very slow and long drawn out, it is evident that the works of scholarship came before the appreciation. The progress of the revival throughout the eighteenth century bears the same relation to similar revivals in modern times as a slow motion picture bears to a picture taken at normal speed. For the literary historian this chapter in English literature is particularly fruitful, for each step can be analysed and the slow progress traced in detail. A whole century elapsed between the publication of the early works bringing new knowledge of older literature and any widespread appreciation outside that of scholars. As a rule, the scholars themselves did not have interest in the literature as an impetus for their work. Very few of the early antiquarians and research men had any respect for the literary quality of the works they revived and annotated. The moving power behind many of the learned works on early literature was the century's love of pure learning for its own sake.

Works of research into early literature were needed before the appreciation could come. The early eighteenth century lack of regard for its literary heritage cannot be compared with the modern depreciation of any literary period which does not accord with contemporary thought. To the men of the next literary generation, medieval poetry may be much more alien in thought and literary aims than it was to the Augustans, but not even a century hence can it be so far away in time, and never can it be so unknown. The few gleams of knowledge which the ^{scholarship of the} past 150 years has placed along English literature up to Elizabeth have brought it centuries nearer to us than it has been to any age for the past 300 years.

To the average cultivated Englishman of the mid-eighteenth century, real English literature began with Waller - a name which must cause a faint nausea to anyone well read in eighteenth century criticism. Up to Chaucer native literature was as alien as Chinese - a comparison often used. Addison, six years before the century began, revealed the general ignorance of pre-Chaucerian literature:

"Long had our dull fore-fathers slept supine,
Nor felt the raptures of the tuneful Nine;
'Till Chaucer first, a merry Bard arose..."⁽¹⁾

⁽¹⁾ An Account of the Greatest English Poets. Works. 1721. I.36

Behind Chaucer all was impenetrable darkness, about which hung the odour of unwashed barbarism. Not only was knowledge of the Anglo-Saxon language perilously near to extinction, but Anglo-Saxon literature was a mere fraction of what it is to us. The existence of such a poem as Beowulf was unsuspected, save for a reference in Humphrey Wanley's catalogue of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, while the few pieces known to have survived were buried in manuscript collections in the libraries, unread. Except for the very limited number to whom such books as Hickes' Thesaurus and Miss Elstob's Anglo-Saxon dictionary were available, the curious reader was dependent for his information on such lean sources as Johnson's History of the English Language, prefixed to his Dictionary. Chaucer was the father of English poetry, the first Englishman to write poetically, but his work was poetry by courtesy only, for eighteenth century ignorance of the grammar and pronunciation of Middle-English, particularly of the value of inflectional endings, had robbed Chaucer of the benefit of metre and reduced his "tuneless numbers" to "mere prose". Chaucer became barely more than a name, while the contemporary translations and modernizations did little more than obscure him further. The first edition of Piers Plowman in modern times did not appear until 1813. The existence of the poem was known to the general reader through the descriptions and discussions

in Warton's Observations on the Faerie Queen and in the the Essay on the Metre of Pierce Plowman in Percy's Reliques, and later through the liberal excerpts given in Warton's History. Although it was widely known that a poem of such length and literary quality survived from medieval times, no one attempted to publish it, and none but a few research scholars had ever seen the poem itself. Malory's Morte d'Arthur had not been published since 1634, and was so neglected that Warton could speak of it in the Observations on the Fairy Queen as if it were completely unknown to his audience. He described it as "a favourite romance about the age of Queen Elizabeth" and translated "by one Sir Thomas Maleory"⁽¹⁾. The story of ignorance and gaping blanks continues up to the Elizabethans, when intelligible literature was supposed to begin, although it was not until Waller that the first refined and polished verses were written.

Mere ignorance of the content of early literature was not the only barrier to understanding. Our modern historical conception of literature as a continuous closely linked chain is so much a part of our blood that it is difficult to realize that it is ~~an~~quired rather than hereditary knowledge. It was as alien to the eighteenth century mind as the theory of evolution. The study of English literary history as a whole rather than

⁽¹⁾ Observations. 2nd edition, 1762. I.19

as a group of separate subjects in scattered essays did not begin until, under the stimulus of the revival of early literature, Thomas Warton wrote his History of English Poetry, the first part of which was published in 1774. Up to Warton the nearest to a continuous narrative had been in biographical dictionaries arranged chronologically, which confirmed the century's idea of literature as a succession of jerky starts and stops, with no connection over the gaps between authors. Without a conception of English literature as a never broken line reaching from Saxon times to the newest author, and without a realization that contemporary literature had not been created spontaneously but was partially formed by the pressure of literary tradition behind it, the eighteenth century could see no relationship between its own literature and that of early times. Thus the distance between the two ages was lengthened and the desire of the later century to study the works of early times was diminished almost to the disappearing point.

The conceit of the eighteenth century is notorious; and it is easy, too easy, to explain the lack of appreciation for earlier literature under that head. For conceit to exist there must be some flaw in reasoning behind it. Granted its reasoning and its facts, the century was right in its attitude; it merely interpreted the facts

as it saw them. The opinion of the writers of the age that literature had reached its peak with them was the only natural conclusion. With the knowledge and perspective we have today, it is obvious to us that literature, though always progressing, is always turning back on itself; that it moves in spirals rather than in a straight line. With their lack of such perspective, eighteenth century readers could not arrive at this commonplace of criticism. To them it seemed perfectly obvious that in any one civilization what comes later must needs be better: not that one age has more great poets than the preceding age, but that the average must necessarily improve. "By the bounty of Nature we are as strong as our Predecessors; and by the Favour of Time ... we stand on higher ground."⁶ Literature was conceived as moving in a progress exactly parallel with the advance of civilization and of time, and as inevitable. This steady improvement had been going on in English literature until their time. Consequently, the eighteenth century could not think of early poetry as other than crude or barbaric in contrast with its own elegance. The most surprising discovery resulting from the restoration of early literature was that it, too, had qualities of art and artifice,

⁶Edward Young: Conjectures on Original Composition.
London, 1759. p.23

and was not merely the half articulate and wholly naive babblings of savage children. In the preface to Five Pieces Percy revealed, with a surprised air, that Icelandic poetry was not so simple and artless as was the common notion: "on the contrary, no compositions abound with more laboured metaphors, or more studied refinements"^(c). It was a new idea for his generation, which regarded its own poetry as the culmination of the forces that produced refinement and polish.

When publications of early literature began to appear, they were accepted, and often presented, as illustrating "the progress of our national poetry, corresponding with the gradual refinement of language and of manners, from the rudeness and simplicity of a remote period, to the polish and elegance of modern times ..." ^(e) If early poetry was praised, it was because its simplicity and emptiness afforded a pleasant relaxation from the brilliance of contemporary letters. With such an attitude it was quite fashionable to express a head-patting affection for older literature, but any genuine appreciation of its qualities was almost a social error as well as an error in criticism. What qualities Augustan poetry might lack in comparison with that of other times were looked upon as

^(c)Percy: Five Pieces. 1763. Sign. A5.

^(e)Publisher's prospectus for Anderson's British Poets, 1792 (?)

incompatible with the refined taste of civilization, and must be therefore less desirable than the qualities which took their place. A combination of the two was judged impossible, or rather, it was never thought of. An occasional reader or poet might cast secretly envious eyes at the freshness and vividness of ancient literature, but such virtues were considered possible only in an early state of literature, just as the elegance of eighteenth century art was ^{the} concomitant of a highly developed artistic civilization.

Under such a philosophy the future was rather a problem. It would not occur to the Augustan man of taste that future literature might not go on steadily in the same path as eighteenth century letters. That it might revert and find its seed for development in the literature of the dim past was as impossible as that one might live over a day of the past. Nevertheless, future literature could not go on improving forever; the high-water mark of civilized art had been reached in the works of Mr. Pope. Therefore, although future art must follow on the same lines, the path led downward. Max Beerbohm has a cartoon of the eighteenth century gentleman looking into the future. He sees there another eighteenth century gentleman, in essential points a duplicate of himself, but a little shabby, a little run down. The idea that the apex of

development in literature as well as in civilization had been reached by the eighteenth century sprang from the incomplete knowledge of the past, and the interpretation of what scanty facts were available. Such was the reasoning, unconscious but implicit in every literary pronouncement, behind the eighteenth century philosophy of literature. It was not inconsistent with the recognition of the great figures of earlier times, provided they were not too early. Shakespeare and Milton were great men in their fashion, but the eighteenth century fashion was greater than theirs. Many an eighteenth century reader would grant that Shakespeare was greater than Pope; nevertheless, had Shakespeare been born at the time of Pope, his poetry would have profited by the hundred years of improvements in civilization and the arts which had elapsed and would have been correspondingly greater. The poet himself would have possessed no more talent, but the more favourable environment of the later century would have drawn from him more finished poetry of higher value.

Naturally, then, early literature was uncouth and barbarous. But it had qualities that the Augustans, consciously or not, hungered after, as is shown by the many modernizations and imitations of poetry which was scorned in its original state. The qualities of other ages were not condemned or ridiculed for themselves alone, but for their inevitable association with the

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crudities of a primitive art. The inability of the eighteenth century to imagine a union of the elegance of a highly polished art with the apparently artless virtues of early poetry was a wet blanket on the progress of early Romanticism. If those virtues appeared in contemporary poetry, they could be associated only with poor art; if they were appreciated by the contemporary reader, that reader must necessarily lack the discriminating taste of the century. The flood of adaptations and imitations was an attempt at compromise; an attempt to inject romance and colour into contemporary poetry while at the same time sheltering the author from criticism under the cloak of imitation. If the result was applauded, the cry was, "See what our art can accomplish even with the crude material of early days;" if condemned, it was because of the admixture of early poetry. That Macpherson's poetry was appreciated as it could never have been had it been published as contemporary work is not, as the editor of Gray's letters says,⁽¹⁾ due to the century's distrust of its own poetical inspiration, but rather to its sense of what was possible and what was impossible. It was not possible, either then or in the future, to have "Gothic" or Romantic poetry, without sacrificing the benefits of a highly civilized art.

⁽¹⁾ Gray's Letters. ed. Tovey, 1900-1912. II. 128n

The attitude described in the preceding paragraphs appears in its entirety in no single man. No man can sum up in himself the thought of his age, as no man can be wholly typical of his generation. The reasoning outlined here was nebulous and dim at the time; the opinions rarely articulate; but the general attitude was always clearly present, with the reasoning implicit in every sniff. What I have tried to give is a composite picture, taken as much from friendly as from hostile camps, of the forces against which the revival of early literature had to work. Warton and Percy shared this attitude as well as the most inveterate disparagers of early literature, while the most adamant rock of classicism was not without its soft corners. What the revival of early literature, as a coherent movement, had to battle against was not a group of men consciously set against it, but that part of the dying age alive in every man. Subsequent chapters will show the history of the modifications of the attitude described here.

We have no analogy today for the eighteenth century situation. Within the past two generations there have been many adjustments of literary verdicts - the revaluation of the eighteenth century, and the more recent revival of the Victorians are cases in point - but they have been merely changes in public sentiment, re-appreciations rather than rediscoveries. With the restoration of early literature in the eighteenth century the

case is different. Today there is no more actual knowledge of the Victorians than there was ten years ago; but during the last half of the eighteenth century great additions were made to the existing knowledge of early literature. The revival was as much literary archaeology as it was a change of literary taste. Before the appreciators and popularizers could get in their work, the spade workers had to supply the raw material. Later changes in literary taste have been inaugurated by critics and creative artists - that is, by men of letters; the change we have under discussion was primarily the work of scholars who were interested in the actual work of digging up rather than in the result of that work. Those men of letters who were early associated with the movement, men like Percy and Gray, were invariably scholars as well. The eighteenth century, whose favourite adjectives of literary praise were curious and ingenious, did not lack ardent scholars. It was an age of fact-finding, of enormous lifetime tasks; in literature, an age of steady plodding work. New information in any field was sure of a welcome, for the general public was interested in facts of all kinds. The files of the Gentleman's Magazine, the Critical Review, and the Monthly Review give a truer idea of the century's mind than ~~all the~~ all the novels of Richardson, Sterne, Fielding, and Smollett put together. In the periodicals there were hundreds of articles and reviews of books on abstruse subjects, not in the vein of modern popular science

but written as one specialist talking to another. It was in the category of new information that early literature was first received and even welcomed by men who despised it as literature. It was received as the archaeological remains of a past age, and the archaeologists themselves were often the first to deprecate their findings. Only rarely and spasmodically was the eighteenth century appreciative of the real merits of early literature. It was not until the next century that the material would be considered apart from its newness and be fully accepted as a part of the literary heritage. The work of Lye, Ritson, Tyrwhitt, and Sharon Turner was to provide glossaries, critical editions, historical dissertations, and to publish works that had hitherto been available only in manuscript.

The revivers who were both scholars and lovers of early literature had to contend not only against those who scorned their findings, but more subtle foes, those who half appreciated but could not swallow older poetry in its raw state. The story of the struggle between men like Ritson and Tyrwhitt, who strove to establish authentic texts, and the large mass of editors and readers who preferred contemporary versions of older literature~~y~~ is the story of the gradual emergence of modern conceptions of textual editing. Pope was by no means the last to think that "a ~~T~~ranslator owes so much to the ~~T~~aste of the ~~A~~ge in

which he lives, as not to make too great a ~~Compliment~~ ^a to ~~the~~ ^{the} former". The practice of adapting texts to contemporary taste continued well into the next century, though not always for so pious a reason as Pope offered. Not only was older literature frankly modernized, adapted, and imitated, but the poems put forward as genuine were often wholly or partly forgeries, while ~~the~~ authentic texts were "made intelligible" or "refined" by the editor's own emendations, usually unacknowledged. The almost incredible ignorance of the reading public in regard to the characteristics of genuine ancient literature is shown by the type of poetry which was published in periodicals like the Gentleman's Magazine, usually with such a head-note as "Found under a stone in an ancient cave" or "Discovered in a family chest untouched for centuries". Most of these relied on the ballad metre and occasional eftsoons and ersts to imply antiquity. The many adaptations and popularizations were a distinct clog on the advance of the movement, because, in them, readers found that they could take painlessly what was considered ancient literature, and thus be up to date in literary fashions without having the trouble of reading original versions. The chief offense of these spurious and "adapted" pieces of early literature was that they

^a Pope's Iliad. London, 1717. III.211. It must be said for Pope that this sentence was not consistent with his views on translation given in the preface.

were generally based on a half-baked knowledge of the originals, and that they continued to appear long after ~~they~~ they had ceased to serve what may have been at the time a useful function. Within limits, in the early stages of the movement, this "improving" editing and even deliberate forgery served to introduce the reading public by easy stages to its new inheritance; but once the introduction was complete, the adaptations and forgeries continued to appear, and the public and even some of the critics for the periodicals greeted the modern versions with a warmth that was missing when they were served an unadulterated text.

Among the many forces in the eighteenth century working for Romanticism, by no means the least powerful was the revival of early literature. The rekindled interest in the past, stirred up by the antiquarians of the century, was both a symptom and a cause: a symptom in that the early popular success of collections of ancient poetry, alien as they were to the spirit of contemporary letters, showed that the reading public hungered after qualities they could not find in the literature of the time; a cause, in that gradually the spirit of early literature was absorbed into contemporary poetry. At its very inception, the revival bore fruit in the little flurry of partially Romantic verse written by Gray and his imitators, but its full effect did not appear until, in 1798, there was published a poem "professedly written in imitation of the style, as well as of the spirit of the elder poets" - The Ancient

Mariner. It was not until the great Romantics that the new themes, new language, and new forms given to poets through the new-old poetry evoked a literature worthy of its inspiration, for it was not until the great Romantics that there were men wholly in tune with the note struck by early poetry. The men we call early Romanticists were divided personalities. The inspiration for their most Romantic poetry was usually second-hand, derived from their reading or from contact with antiquarian scholars, rather than spontaneously from their emotions. Doubtless the Romantic movement would have flowered even if there had been no revival of early literature: the progress of what Matthew Arnold called the Time-spirit is too inevitable to be balked by one check. But there would certainly have been fewer precursors of Romanticism if the source of their inspiration had been lacking.

Accidentally or not, the ennui with which the reading public was beginning to look upon the poetry of the time coincided with the beginning of the restoration of early literature. Those who were ardent in their advocacy of ancient poetry were not always ignorant of the reverberations of their work. They saw where they were going, though they were not always willing or courageous enough to be consistent. It is in the correspondence of the antiquarian group, in the byways of their printed works,

and in the midst of their apologetic prefaces, that we find the most Romantic - and consciously Romantic - utterances until Wordsworth and Coleridge. In a letter which is extremely important in literary history William Shenstone showed that as early as 1761 he was aware that the time was ripe for a new spirit in poetry:

"The melody of our verse has been, perhaps, carried to its utmost perfection; that of prose seems to have been more neglected, and to be capable of greater than it has yet attained. It seems to be a favourable era for the appearance of such irregular poetry. [Ossian] The taste of the age, so far as it regards plan and style, seems to have been carried to its utmost height, as may appear in the works of Akenside, Gray's Odes, and Churchyard verses, and Mason's Monody and Elfrida. The public has seen all that art can do, and they want the more striking efforts of wild, original, enthusiastic genius. It seems to exclaim aloud, with the chorus in Julius Caesar,

'Oh rather than be slaves to these deep learned men,
Give us our wildness and our woods, and our huts
and caves again.'

I know not how far you will allow the distinction of the principle on which I build my remark, namely, that the taste of the present age is somewhat higher than its genius."⁶

Shenstone was not alone in his appraisal of the literary temper of the time. Percy, either independently or through his association with Shenstone,

⁶ Edinburgh Annual Register, 1809. p. 549. Reprinted in Nichols' Illustrations, VII.220

certainly understood it. In the summer of 1762, he wrote to Warton endeavouring to induce him to continue and complete Chaucer's Squire's Tale: "And let me add", he concluded, "nothing would fix your fame upon a more solid basis, or be more likely to captivate the attention of the public, which seems to loath all the common forms of Poetry; & requires some new species to quicken its pall'd appetite". To this comment Warton replied, "You are certainly right in thinking that the Public ought to have their attention called to Poetry in new forms; to Poetry indued with new manners & new images. How goes the Collection of Ancient Ballads?"⁽¹⁾

It was to the past that Warton, Percy, Gray, and their satellites turned for these new manners and new images. The genius of the age, according to Shenstone, was not equal to its taste. The necessary satisfaction for that taste for new forms and new images came from poetry which, either in form or content, or both, looked back to the earlier literature of Britain. Percy was not unaware of the possible effect of his work; he was an opportunist rather than a trail-blazer, but he happened to guess correctly. The beginning of Romanticism was plainly in the air, seeking its first satisfaction in the

⁽¹⁾Harvard University MSS. f. 10, 10A, 11. Reprinted by Leah Dennis in Publications of the Modern Language Association. Vol. 46.p.1166-1201.

poetry of the less distant past. As the movement grew in power, literary men were to search further and further back until in the course of less than a half century the ballads, the writers of the sixteenth, the fifteenth, and the fourteenth centuries, the metrical romances, and finally the wealth of Beowulf and Anglo-Saxon poetry were successively brought to light.

The convenience with which the publication of Percy's Reliques forms the appropriate starting place for a study of the revival of early literature is misleading, for, like all neat, clean-cut starting points in literature, the Reliques was as much the flower of one movement as it was the seed of another. Throughout the first half of the eighteenth century there had been repeated attempts to bring forward some portions of the forgotten literature, and it was not because of any lack of enthusiastic missionary editors that these enterprises remained as isolated, scattered events, rather than assumed the coherence of a movement. What was lacking for the early success of the revival was an audience partially prepared and consciously aware that it was being given something new and wholly irreconcilable with the orthodox literary fare. There is nothing ^{more} ~~xx~~ disconcerting and

dampening to any revolution, literary or otherwise, than to be accepted without demur, and fitted in comfortably with the status quo. Such an apathetic acceptance, though it be acceptance, is death to new ideas, for without a strong awareness of them as new, they are usually suffocated by the old established ideas in power. This was the fate of the first eighteenth century editions of early literature. Although occasionally popular - some of them went through several editions - they were without the important repercussions attendant on similar publications in the later half of the century, because they were received without enthusiasm, either hostile or favourable; the older poetry was enjoyed together with contemporary literature. In the later half of the century there came a realization that the two orders cannot live together, that one is death to the other, and with that understanding the success of the new-old literature was assured.

The early poetry that was beginning to receive real critical and editorial attention may be roughly divided into two types. The first embraced the work of known authors who had been long neglected, in which class Tyrwhitt's edition of the Canterbury Tales is outstanding. The other type consisted of the work of

unknown authors, the "popular literature" which the man of taste, with a few important exceptions, had previously held in the greatest scorn. The term popular literature is at best an ambiguous one, since it has for us today the double connotation of literature made by the people and literature made for the people. I shall use it here, of course, always in the former sense. This popular literature included the old ballads and songs which tradition had handed down from generation to generation.

Of the two kinds of early literature the common ballad, long considered the property of the kitchen and the stable, had been most continuously kept alive. The memory of the people had proved to be a better preservative than Caxton's printing press. A few men like Samuel Pepys and John Selden in the seventeenth century had already begun to collect old ballads, but critical attention was sparse and for the most part apologetic in tone. Addison's Spectator papers on Chevy Chase in 1711, though timid enough in themselves, indicated that the man of letters could see the literary value of what was usually regarded as sub-literary entertainment.

The ballad cannot be said to have suffered the long night of obscurity during which such older poets as Lydgate, Occleve, and James I. of Scotland were com-

pletely forgotten. In the first half of the eighteenth century collections of ballads were common, and fairly popular as amusements if not as literature. A publication important not so much in itself as for its use by later editors was A Collection of Old Ballads, corrected from the best and most ancient copies extant. With introductions, historical, critical, or humourous. 3 volumes, London, 1723-25. The ballads chosen were preponderantly narratives of historical events, varied by the always popular off-colour pieces. The prefaces usually gave the historical background of the incident in the ballad. The editorial care to get the "best and most ancient" texts, implied in the title, is noteworthy in a century when the texts of early English literature were considered raw materials for every editor with a taste for rhyme. The collection was used later in the century by Percy,⁽⁴⁾ and as a basis of Thomas Evans' Old Ballads, 1777. Watson's A Choice Collection of Comic and Serious Scots Poems both Ancient and Modern, which came out in three parts in 1706, 1709, and 1711, was, according to the preface, "the first of its nature which has been published in our own Native Scots Dialect". The extreme popularity of Allan Ramsay's Tea-Table Miscellany, published in three volumes in 1723

⁽⁴⁾Cf. p.44 for Percy's use of the collection.

or 1724, and containing ballads touched up by Ramsay together with his own poetry, is shown by the fact that the work went through ten editions up to 1740.

The importance of Ramsay's connection with the movement rests not so much on the ballads in his Tea-Table Miscellany as on the pieces of forgotten early poetry which appeared in his much less popular collection, The Evergreen. He secured a loan of the Bannatyne manuscript,⁽¹⁾ and from this he edited The Evergreen, being a collection of Scots poems, wrote by the ingenious before 1600, published in two volumes in 1724. The poet most liberally represented in this collection was Dunbar, but poems assigned, though not always correctly, to Henryson, Kennedy, and James I. were also included; not in their original state, to be sure, for Ramsay omitted and added stanzas, pruning and benevolently editing the old poets with the bland unsdrupulousness that was so notoriously to characterize later editors of the same material. Although Ramsay specifically limited the collection to poems "wrote by the ingenious before 1600", he evidently thought that as long as the poets were ingenious, the date was not so important. Of the eighteenth century pieces in the collection, one, The Vision, was really by Ramsay himself, and

⁽¹⁾ Cf. p. 123-125 for a discussion of this manuscript

one, Hardyknute, was a forgery of Lady Wardlaw's which was to have an interesting later history. Ramsay deliberately tried to palm off the modern pieces as authentic ancient poetry by putting them into what passed for medieval language; it was no innocent deception. Although The Evergreen did not achieve anything like the popularity of the Tea-Table Miscellany - its second edition was not until 1761 - it was here that the older poets were recognized and given an early though ~~thorough~~ inaccurate representation.

A far more ambitious and systematic attempt to bring the old poets back to light was Mrs. Cooper's book The Muses Library,⁶ published in 1737. Mrs. Cooper's plan was to list the poets in as accurate chronological order as she could, giving a few brief facts about the life and work of each, with perhaps a sentence or two of critical comment, followed by a short selection from his work. She began with a Conveyance of Edward the Confessor's, then commented briefly on Richard the Hermit, Joseph of Exeter, Robert Baston, Henry Bradshaw, before she reached the work of Langland, Gower, Chaucer, Lydgate, Occleve, Harding, Barclay, Robert Fabian, and Skelton. She continued with Wyatt and the early Elizabethans, taking the volume down to Samuel Daniel, the last poet included. The Muses Library, far more than The Evergreen, pointed the way to a scholarly study

⁶The Muses Library; or a series of English poetry, from the Saxons to the reign of King Charles II... Vol. I. London, 1737
~~xxxxxx xxxxxxxxxxkxxk~~ Re-issued 1741.

of the works of the old poets. Although the collection received a sort of posthumous renown in the later half of the century, it was hardly a success in its own day, for the proposed continuation of the work was abandoned, and volume one was the only volume published.

The publication of Thomas Warton's Observations on the Faerie Queen of Spenser in 1754 showed that by that time Warton had done much of the spade work for his History of English Poetry. In studying Spenser he had to go back to Spenser's predecessors, and in one of his characteristic digressions he gave a summary of the work of Gower and Chaucer, and much fuller comment on their successors, Lydgate, Hardyng, and Stephen Hawes, the last always a favourite of Warton. Of the Scottish poets he mentioned only Dunbar and Lindsay, but to them he gave a very flattering paragraph. In another long digression he gave an account of The Visions of Pierce Plowman, discussing its language, versification, and even text.^(c)

The advance in Warton's knowledge which took place in the eight years between the first (1754) and second (1762) editions of the Observations is indicated by his inclusion in the second edition of a discussion of the Vision by Adam Davie, "the most antient allegor-

^(c)Op.Cit. p.89n-92n

ical poem which I have seen in our language", and of Barclay's Ship of Fooles, neither of which is mentioned in the first edition. Warton's increase in knowledge also made him less dogmatic in discussing the early poets. Speaking of Lydgate in 1754 he wrote "...it ought not to be denied, that Lydgate is the first English poet, who can be read without hesitation and difficulty"⁽¹⁾. More equivocal eight years later, he changed his statement to read "[Lydgate] is perhaps the first of our poets whom common readers can peruse with little attention and difficulty"⁽²⁾. In the same way he tempered his description of Piers Plowman. Its "obsolete" style in the first edition became its "antique" style in the second edition.

In 1760, the same year in which Ossian was published there appeared a comparatively unnoticed book which foreshadowed the twentieth^{century} ideals of editorial policy. This work was Prolusions: or select Pieces of ancient Poetry, compil'd with great Care from their several originals, and offer'd to the Publick as Specimens of the Integrity that should be found in the Editions of worthy Authors,⁽³⁾ London 1760, edited by Edward Capell, the Shakespearian editor. The volume included "I. The Notbrowne Mayde; Master Sackville's Induction; and Overbury's Wife: II. Edward the third, a Play thought to be writ by Shakes-

⁽¹⁾ Observations. 1st ed. p. 232

⁽²⁾ Observations. 2nd ed. PI.104

⁽³⁾ About this Ritson wrote: "...The reverse of this, however, is the case: the editor (except, perhaps, in a single instance) being equally licentious and conceited; and indebted to his printer's merit for preservation from oblivion or contempt".

(English Anthology. III.60)

peare: III. Those excellent didactic Poems, intitl'd Nosce Teipsum, written by Sir John Davis". In his preface Capell explained his editorial policy, which he had already set forth in his title. For the text of the pieces, he collated as many of the early editions as he could find, using the one he considered best as the basis for his text, but noting all the variant readings he found in the other editions, which he carefully listed. Occasionally he omitted passages, provoked by the dullness or indelicacy of the original, but these omissions were scrupulously acknowledged. He admitted that his theory that Edward III was the work of Shakespeare was very conjectural, based solely on the evidence of style. After a few comments on the other pieces, he concluded his preface by reiterating his "chief interest; which was, to exhibit a specimen of what he conceiv'd ought to be found in that work which would truly merit the name of an edition". The pieces included in Capell's work, though they mark a further step in the revival of pre-Elizabethan literature, do not concern us here so much as does the high editorial standard of the work as a whole. Capell, one of the enlightened Shakespeare editors of the century, consciously set a standard for later editors. The path of least resistance for them, however, proved to be other-

wise, and what influence Capell might have had ~~was~~ submerged by the more sensationally successful policy of Percy's Reliques, published five years later.

The work of the early revivers, abortive and without direct influence as it was, was invaluable in leavening the eighteenth century audience in preparation for the later editors. The early movement had in embryo all the elements of the later movement: in Capell and Ramsay we have examples of the two widely differing conceptions of the duties of an antiquarian editor, which in the later editors was to lead to the hostilities of Ritson and Percy. Ramsay and Percy, proponents of the same easy-going policy, and both editors of popular collections, were the corresponding peaks; the difference between them lay not in the men themselves, nor in their works, but in the timeliness of their publications, in the temper of their audiences, and in the number of editors directly following them. In the publication of the Reliques Percy capitalized the work of the preceding generation of antiquaries. The popularity of the Reliques quickened the interest of the man of taste; but more than that, the work knitted together a desultory and leaderless movement of curiosity concerning early

literature and pointed it definitely towards critical investigation, while at the same time it rescued the restored literature from the real danger of becoming the exclusive property of the academician.

II

The Making of the Folio

II

The Making of the Reliques

Thomas Percy's interest in literature, like that of many another eighteenth century cleric, ~~was~~ ostensibly ~~not~~ an amusement and a side line, came in very useful in his professional advancement. That the curate of Easton Maudit became Dean of Carlisle and Bishop of Dromore was not unconnected with the curate's publications, although to the end of his life the Bishop was zealous to make it clear to the world that even such an important work as the Reliques was not the product of his episcopal days. In connection with the publication of an ode eulogising the Reliques, the 75 year old Percy nervously wrote: "I would wish to have my present situation included in a parenthesis thus (now Lord Bishop etc.) lest it be thought that the Reliques were my episcopal employment."⁽¹⁾ Percy was always a little fidgety about his association with literature that had, to eighteenth century taste, an unfamiliar, that is vulgar, flavour. Three years before the publication of the Reliques, Percy's collaborator, Shenstone, had to reassure him that his work would not make him "known⁽²⁾ to the world in the Light merely of a Ballad-monger".

① Percy to Anderson. Jan. 31, 1804. National Library of Scotland. Ms. 22.3.11; letter 68.

② Shenstone to Percy. Nov. 14, 1762. Brit. Mus. Mss. 23221; f. 101. The Shenstone-Percy correspondence in the British Museum has been published by Dr. Hans Hecht in Thomas Percy und William Shenstone. Quellen und Forschungen, CIII. 1909

Although Percy wrote several works in the conventional clerical tradition, his name was associated then as now with his more adventurous books. He had begun his career as a man of letters in 1761 with a translation of a Portuguese version of a Chinese novel, Hau Kiau Choon, while in 1763 appeared his Five Pieces of Runic Poetry, translated from the Islandic Language. The Five Pieces, a note on the reverse of the title page tells us, "were drawn up for the press in the year 1761: but the publication has been delayed by an accident." Strangely enough then, their composition was exactly contemporaneous with Gray's Norse poems, the publication of which was delayed even longer, until 1768. Percy's work was the first popular English publication of the old Norse literature, which gave so much in subject matter, mood, and language, to early Romanticism. The five pieces Percy included were The Incantation of Hervor, ⁽¹⁾ The Romance of Egill the Scald, ⁽²⁾ The Funeral Song of Hacon, ⁽³⁾ The Complaint of Harold, ⁽⁴⁾ and The Dying Ode of Regner Ladbrog. ⁽⁵⁾ The translations were in prose, and were not taken directly from the Icelandic but from Latin translations which Percy adapted slightly in the last two poems to give preference to the French versions of Mallet. Percy

⁽¹⁾In Hickes' Thesaurus, 1705

⁽²⁾In Worm's Literatura Runica, 1636

⁽³⁾In Bartholin's Antiquitatum Danicarum ... 1689

made no pretense that he knew old Norse, and at his request Edward Lye, later editor of the Anglo-Saxon dictionary, collated the second-hand translations with the originals.⁽¹⁾

Percy's introduction to the Five Pieces is interesting to the student of his editorial policy, particularly in view of his later behaviour. It is mainly an apology for introducing such savage poetry into the elegant literature of his own polished age, a note he never stopped sounding so long as he published, though its fundamental insincerity was to grow more and more evident. His holier-than-thou attitude in regard to the elusive Ossian originals is particularly amusing. "It would be as vain to deny, as perhaps it is impolitic to admit, that this attempt is owing to the success of the Erse fragments ... And yet till the Translator of those poems thinks proper to produce his originals, it is impossible to say whether they do not owe their superiority, if not their whole existence entirely to himself ... The Editor was in some doubt whether he should subjoin or suppress his originals. But as they lie within little compass, and as the books whence they are extracted are very scarce, he was tempted to add them as vouchers for the authenticity of his version". Accordingly, Percy carefully included his originals in an appendix to the translations, a literary practice which, much to his discomfort, he later decided not to follow.

⁽¹⁾ Brit. Mus. Add. Mss. 32325, f.240

The whole editorial policy of the little book seems, on the surface, vastly different from the policy of the much-maligned editor of the Reliques. In the Five Pieces, Percy supplied asterisks wherever he omitted any of the original, but appreciation of his editorial honesty is somewhat limited by his confession as to the reasons for such care. Every poem in the collection had already been published in Latin, "by which every deviation would at once be detected. It behoved him [the editor] therefore, to be as exact as possible". Apparently Percy's later shortcomings cannot be explained by ignorance; he did not need Ritson to tell him that an editor should try to reproduce his originals faithfully. But even when he was editing the Five Pieces he kept to the path of strict reproduction only because any deviation would at once be detected.

Percy's work on the Five Pieces was indicative of the avid interest he took in the by-paths of literature. It was not only early English poetry that attracted him; in 1762 he wrote to Evan Evans, the Welsh antiquary, of his collections of poetry of strange lands - Arabia, the East Indies, Peru, Lapland, and Greenland.⁽⁶⁾ Interest in early Norse literature was not so unusual as interest in the literature of the other countries Percy mentioned. Eighteenth

⁶Cf. p.286-7.

century interest in old Norse⁽¹⁾ really began with the publication of Hickes' Thesaurus in 1705,⁽²⁾ but the work which focussed Percy's attention on the old Runic poetry was Mallet's L'Introduction a l'Histoire de Dannemarc, the first part of which was published in 1755, and the second in 1756. The second volume was reviewed by Goldsmith in the Monthly Review for April, 1757. Mallet's Introduction was an account of the customs, religion, manners, and mythology of the Scandinavian countries. He included a French translation of the first part of the younger Edda, abstracts from the older Edda, and French versions of several Runic poems. His complete Histoire de Dannemarc was published in six volumes in 1763, but it was the Introduction which fascinated the early Romanticists in England.

Percy drew heavily on Mallet for notes to the poems as well as for aid in translation. He acknowledged his debt, spoke in high terms of Mallet's "curious and entertaining account", and announced, "a translation of this work is in great forwardness and will speedily be published". The translation was by Percy himself. Although apparently well

⁽¹⁾See F.E.Farley's Scandinavian Influences in the English Romantic Movement, Boston, 1903, for an exhaustive discussion of the Scandinavian studies of the eighteenth century.

⁽²⁾George Hickes: Thesaurus Linguarum Veterum Septentrionalium, Oxford, 1705, A miscellaneous work on the old Teutonic languages including an Anglo-Saxon grammar, specimens of Norse and Saxon poetry, and Humphrey Wanley's catalogue of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts.

under way in 1763, it did not appear until 1770, when it was published anonymously under the title Northern Antiquities. Percy added little to the original beyond a few notes and an introductory essay in which he disputed Mallet's theory that the Goths and Celts were originally the same people. ⁶⁾

⑥ Percy did not straighten out Mallet's ethnological confusion to the satisfaction of other investigators. The interrelation of the European peoples was a subject of constant speculation in the eighteenth century, and no theory was too absurd to want a defendant. one of the earliest books devoted to the problem was Some Inquiries Concerning the First Inhabitants, Languages, Religion, Learning, and Letters of Europe, published at Oxford in 1758. Its author was Francis Wise, a member of the Society of Antiquaries. He told of Jornandes' theory that the Goths first came out of Scandinavia and sent colonies southward; of Sheringham's theory that the Goths and Getae were the same people; and of Isidor's theory that the word Goth was equivalent to Scyth or Scythian (p.82 ff.) Wise himself maintained that Mt. Ararat was situated in Scythia and that consequently it was from there that language and races spread, with the Goths emigrating to Scandinavia; the Celts to Gaul, or France.

Ethnology became mixed with religion for some people. About 1790 Richard Brothers began to have a series of revelations and started to preach that the English were the lost tribes of Israel. This Anglo-Israel theory survived long after Brothers died. The more common of the eccentric ideas were summarized very seriously by Edward Davis in his Celtic Researches (1804) The Celts, according to him, were the descendants of Noah. Genuine primitive tradition came from God, through Adam and Noah, to be preserved by the Druids. Of course, it was then a comparatively easy matter for Davis to show that the civilizations of India and Greece sprang from the teachings of the British Druids.

The real struggle among the saner of the amateur ethnologists came in differentiating the Celts from the Goths. The year after the publication of Northern Antiquities James Macpherson issued his Introduction to the History of Great Britain in which he distinguished between the Celts

The first volume included the historical part of the work, while the second volume contained specimens of Scandinavian literature, consisting of translations and abstracts from the Eddas and four ancient odes, three of which had already appeared in Five Pieces. Percy added as an appendix the Latin version of the Edda, published by J.Göransson, the Swedish scholar, in 1746.

Five years earlier, in 1765, Percy had published his Reliques of Ancient English Poetry, the work that was destined to give him literary immortality and set such a fashion in literary taste that its editor has since then been regarded, rightly or wrongly, as one of the great champions in the eighteenth century revolt against neo-classicism.

and the Scandinavians, though he made the Celts identical with the Scythians. John Pinkerton said later that Macpherson's work "might be pronounced the most false and dishonest book ever written were it not the most foolish and ignorant" (Dissertation on the Origin and Progress of the Scythians or Goths, 1787, p.99n). In the same essay and again in his Inquiry into the History of Scotland Preceding the Reign of Malcolm III ..., 1790, Pinkerton himself contended that the Irish, the Scottish Highlanders, the Bretons, and the Spanish Biscayans were the only surviving descendants of the original population of Europe, and that in them, in their features, manners, and history could be traced the unimproved and unimprovable savage, the Celt. The Celts he carefully distinguished from the Scythae or Goths who came from Persia and overran almost the whole of Europe. By Pinkerton's theory the Lowland Scot was a descendant of the Picts, a Scandinavian tribe who preceded the Celts or Scots, who came from Ireland. Thus, according to Pinkerton the original language of Scotland was a dialect of the Gothic. Pinkerton was supported by several ethnologists and etymologists and by Dr. John Jamieson in his Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language. In the introductory essay prefixed to Scottish Songs, 1794 and in two of his posthumous works Joseph Ritson lashed Pinkerton's theories and tried to show that the Picts were really Celtic. The most comprehensive answer to Pinkerton's "Goth-Pik" theories came in George Chalmers' Caledonia, 1807.

As was the case with all Percy's works, the preparation of the Reliques was a long slow process. The story of the youthful Percy's discovery of the famous folio manuscript at ~~at~~ the house of Humphrey Pitt, where it was being used by the maids to light the fires, is well known. The manuscript was a "scrubby, shabby paper" book with leaves missing from both the beginning and the end. The bottom half of the leaves in the first part of the book had all been torn off. It was further damaged when Percy sent it to an ignorant binder who pared off the top and bottom lines of many of the pages. Percy himself treated his precious possession carelessly at first, even tearing out leaves to save the trouble of transcribing, but after the publication of the Reliques it was jealously guarded by Percy and his heirs for 100 years. The publication of its contents was finally achieved in 1867 by J.W.Hales and F.J.Furnival⁶. It was not until then that a close approximation of the truth regarding Percy's use of his manuscript could be ascertained.

The folio manuscript was the nucleus around which Percy built and enlarged his collection, with the aid of many of the more eminent literary figures of his time. What help he received he freely, even profusely acknowledged in his preface, where he made extensive acknowledgement not only to Shennstone, Hailes, Farmer, and Dr. Johnson, but apparently to as many other men of standing in the literary world as he could

⁶Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript: Ballads and Romances. Edited by J.W.Hales and F.J.Furnivall, London, 1867-68. 3 vols.

conjure up, including Thomas Warton, Garrick, Edward Lye, and many less prominent people. "The names of so many men of learning and character the Editor hopes will serve as an amulet to guard him from every unfavourable censure, for having bestowed any attention on a parcel of Old Ballads. It was at the request of these gentlemen, and of others eminent for their genius and taste, that this little work was undertaken". In the long page of acknowledgement and in his head notes to the poems Percy was often misleading and sometimes definitely lying. He announced in his preface that "the greater part of them [the poems in the Reliques] are extracted from an ancient MS. in the editor's possession, which contains near two hundred poems, songs, and metrical romances", but the publication of the folio manuscript by Hales and Furnival in 1867 disclosed that in reality only 45 poems, or exactly one fourth of the Reliques, were taken from the folio. A comparison of Percy's acknowledgement of other sources with his actual use of them will show that it is never safe to trust his word in connection with the Reliques. It is only through an examination of Percy's correspondence during the years preceding the Reliques that we can arrive at some approximation of the truth, and even there much has to be discounted.

The contents of the Reliques came from earlier printed anthologies, from the Pepys collection, from various

correspondents who supplied him with ballads, and from the famous folio manuscript. The older collections which his correspondence shows that he consulted were: The Musical Miscellany, The Golden Garland, Wit and Mirth or Pills to Purge Melancholy, The Hive, Orpheus Caledonius, The Paradise of Dainty Devices, The Muses Mercury, The Palace of Pleasure, Ballard's Collection, Watson's Collection, and the anthologies of Ramsay.⁽¹⁾ The poems as they finally appeared in the Reliques are such a mosaic of bits from numerous sources, cemented together with the additions of Percy and his small army of helpers, that for many of the pieces there is no one source. When a piece does follow with some faithfulness a single text, Percy's statements usually shroud its origin in black letter mystery. A most revealing indication of his use of earlier anthologies can be seen in his treatment of the material in A Collection of Old Ballads,⁽²⁾ Percy's copy of which is preserved in the British Museum. Over half the ballads contained here are carefully annotated with Percy's marginal notes. Each ballad that he contemplated using he collated with at least one other version, sometimes more than one. For these collations, according to his own notes, he used Ballard's

⁽¹⁾ In his edition of the Reliques Wheatley incorrectly stated that Percy took poems from England's Helicon. Late in 1764, when the Reliques was all printed, Percy was still trying to secure a copy of this work.

⁽²⁾ A Collection of Old Ballads. Corrected from the best and most Ancient Copies Extant. With Introductions Historical, Critical, or Humourous. 3 vols. London, 1723-25

Collection, Pills to Purge Melancholy, Dryden's Miscellany, Orpheus Caledonius, The Musical Miscellany, The Golden Garland, the Pepys collection of black letter broadsides, and his own folio manuscript. Twenty-~~five~~^{four} of the ballads found in the Collection appear also in the Reliques⁽¹⁾, most of them following the Collection's version, with a few changes, but Percy does not mention the collection in the first edition. In the second edition he mentioned it in connection with only one piece, and that in a footnote.⁽²⁾

A few examples of Percy's handling of this book will show his editorial methods. Fair Rosamond,⁽³⁾ according to Percy's marginal note in the Collection, was collated with four copies in the Pepys collection. Percy certainly did the work, for the pages of the ballad are covered with his marginal and interlinear corrections, but for some unknown reason, when he came to arrange the text for insertion in the Reliques, he completely ignored his elaborate collations and took over the Collection's text almost word for word. For the source of the ballad he

(1) These are: Fair Rosamond, Queen Eleanor's Confession, St. George and the Dragon, The Dragon of Wantley, Chevy Chase, The Lamentation of Jane Shore, Sir Andrew Barton's Death, Prince of England's Courtship to the King of France's Daughter, The Lady turn'd Serving-Man, The Children in the Wood, The Bride's Burial, The Lady's Fall, Lord Thomas and Fair Ellinor, Gilderoy, The King and the Miller of Mansfield, King Leir and his three Daughters, King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, King John and the Abbot of Canterbury, The Wanton Wife of Bath, The Spanish Lady's Love, The Blind Beggar of Bednal Green, The Baffled Knight, William and Margaret, and The Gaberlunzie Man.

(2) King John and the Abbot of Canterbury. II.302

(3) Collection, p. 11; Reliques, II.137

gives "four black-letter copies". He collated the Collection^(a) text of The Dragon of Wantley with Pepys, and noted also where it might be found in "Pills". In the Reliques the text of the Collection with corrections from Pepys is followed, and Percy's headnote says that he derived the ballad from Pepys, "collated with two or three others". The King and the Miller of Mansfield^(b) was collated with Pepys and the folio manuscript. The Collection's text is the basis of the Reliques' version, with the folio and Pepys collations generally ignored, but Percy's headnote says that the ballad was taken from "the editor's folio ms. collated with an old black-letter copy in the Pepys collection". The Spanish Lady's Love^(c) he collated with the folio. The Reliques text, with the exception of one word, ignores the corrections and follows the Collection's text, while Percy says his version was "printed from an ancient black-letter copy, corrected in part by the Editor's folio MS."

It is needless to pile on details of Percy's use of the older collection. A dozen similar illustrations could be given, but the four cited are typical, although even they do not reveal the full tortuousness of Percy's editorial path. Even when he took his text from the Collection, he very often doubled consonants and added final e's to give his pieces a

(a) Collection: I.37; Reliques: III.277
 (b) " I.53; " III.179
 (c) " II.191; " II.227

greater air of antiquity. In addition, Percy's headnotes are often obviously indebted to those of the Collection, though Percy expanded and rewrote them in a more elegant style. In editing the folio manuscript Hales and Furnivall concluded that Percy had taken only 45 pieces from the manuscript. The evidence of the Collection^① reduces that number by six, for in those six pieces, Percy relied first on the Collection's text, and only secondarily, if at all, on the manuscript.

From the information we have it appears that Percy's only genuine manuscript source for his work was his own folio. He asked Lord Hailes, the Scottish antiquary, to get for him a manuscript at the Advocates' Library in Edinburgh, but Hailes could not find it. We know that he had access to the Maitland MS., for Shenstone mentioned in a letter that Percy had told him of a collection at Magdalene College which contained "Many of Dunbar, Maitland of Lethington, and one allegorical poem of Gawin Douglas, too obsolete for his collection ..."^(e), but it was not until after the success of the Reliques was assured and Percy was thinking of publishing another collection that he did any work on the Maitland manuscript.

The helpers whom Percy named in his preface were useful to him, but not always in the way that Percy wished

① They are: The King and the Miller of Mansfield, The Lady's Fall, The King of France's Daughter, The Spanish Lady's Love, The Beggar's Daughter of Bednal Green, and Sir Lancelot du Lake (Collection's title: King Arthur ...)

(e) Nichols: Illustrations. VII.222

to imply. Percy, with his apparent timidity about the possible reception of his work, was naturally anxious to include among his helpers the name of the great Dr. Johnson. He exaggerated the efforts of the Dictator in his behalf. "To the friendship of Dr. Samuel Johnson he owes many valuable hints for the conduct of his work". And again: "At length the importunity of friends prevailed [to publish the folio] and he could refuse nothing to such judges as the author of the Rambler, and the late Mr. Shenstone." Johnson, however, does not seem to have taken a very active part in helping the young editor, despite Percy's profuse acknowledgements. That Johnson promised more assistance than he gave is very probable. To Shenstone Percy wrote:

"If I regarded only my private satisfaction, I should be by no means eager to render my Collection cheap by publication. It was the importunity of my friend Mr. Johnson, that extorted a promise of this kind from me. Indeed he made me very tempting offers, for he promised to assist me in selecting the most valuable pieces & in revising the Text of those he selected. Nay further, if I would leave a blank page between every two I transcribed, he would furnish it out with the proper notes etc. etc."⁶

When Percy edited his Shenstone correspondence in 1772, he wrote in red at the bottom of this page: "These Promises he never executed: nor except for a few slight hints,

⁶ Percy to Shenstone. Jan. 9, 1758. Brit. Mus. Mss. 28221. f.10

delivered viva voce, did he furnish any contributions, &c." Dr. Johnson was a guest at Easton Maudit for two months during the summer of 1764, when the Reliques was completed except for a few touched on the glossary. Percy wrote to Hailes asking for more explanations for the glossary, adding: "Mr. Johnson ... who has been with me for two months past on a visit & left me but last week, gives them up as inexplicable: and as he has a good deal of Glossarizing knowledge, it will be some honour to succeed, after he has given them over"⁽¹⁾. Percy's Diary notes Johnson's visit, but mentions no conference about the Reliques, or any help whatever. Instead of helping Percy Johnson spent much of his time reading an old Spanish Romance.⁽²⁾ Johnson, who brought with him the blind Mrs. Williams, must have been a trying guest at all times, and the two months wore heavily on Percy. Writing to Farmer at the end of the first month, he said: "I have for some time past had Mr. Johnson & his friend Mrs. Williams at my house: They have not yet left me, tho they begin to talk of it."⁽³⁾ In his own diary he noted: "Dr. Johnson stays with us still", but on second thought he crossed out the word still. Johnson condoned his young friend's work; probably he even encouraged him to undertake it, but his active assistance was slight, if any.

⁽¹⁾ Percy to Hailes, Aug. 21, 1764. Brit. Mus. Mss. 28221. f.61

⁽²⁾ Beswell: Life of Johnson. ed. G.B.Hill. I.49

⁽³⁾ Percy to Farmer, Jul. 29, 1764. Brit. Mus. Mss. 28222. f.44

The helper who really determined the form and contents of the Reliques was William Shenstone. Here again Percy took pains to conceal the whole truth from later investigators. Percy's prefatory acknowledgement is accurate as far as it goes: "The plan of the work was settled in concert with the late elegant Mr. Shenstone, who was to have borne a joint share in it, had not death unhappily prevented him: Most of the modern pieces were of his selection and arrangement, and the Editor hopes to be pardoned if he has retained some things out of partiality to the judgment of his friend." The real truth of the amount and bias of Shenstone's influence can be more nearly ascertained by an examination of the Percy-Shenstone correspondence which is preserved in the British Museum, though it must be remembered that, in addition to the correspondence, several visits were exchanged between the two men, during which the Reliques must have been a favourite topic of conversation. In September 1762, when the work was taking shape most rapidly, Percy spent a fortnight at Leasowes. A note on the leaf before the letters begin reads: N.B. Of my Correspondence with Mr. Shenstone I have here preserved almost all his letters and Billets, however inconsiderable: But of my Own (tho' all were returned to me after his Death) I have kept only a few, chiefly such as tended to explain his letters, or were some way or other

referred to in them"⁶⁾. But not only did Percy destroy some of his own letters, but those he included he edited by blotting out passages, over which he sometimes made interlinear emendations. Fortunately one or two of these blotted out passages can be deciphered, and indicate what Percy was trying to conceal, both there and probably in his other deletions. In the correspondence and in his own statements in the 4th edition of the Reliques he concealed much, but not quite enough to prevent the truth concerning the real literary relationship between the two men from being discoverable.

Percy admits in his preface that the plan of the work and much of the selection and arrangement was the work of Shenstone. The correspondence reveals the truth of this statement, and we need not trouble to prove what Percy acknowledged; a glance at the two men at work illustrates the partnership. As early as 1757 Percy wrote to Shenstone: "When I had the pleasure of seeing you last, you were so good as to read to me an old Scotch Song intituled Gil Morris. I am possess'd of a very curious old MS Collection of ancient Ballads, many of which I believe were never printed; among the rest is a Copy of your Song under the Title of Child Maurice: if you would do me the Favour to

⑥ Brit. Mus. Mss. 28221, f.4

lend me your Song to collate with my MS. I would punctually and carefully return it. Mr Johnson has seen my MS. & has a desire to have it printed. It contains many old Romantic and Historical Ballads: Upon King Arthur & the Knights of his round Table, Merlin, etc. etc."⁽⁶⁾

Shenstone answered: "I have enclosed the ballad of Gill Morrice for your Perusal, at the same time that I very much question whether Child Morrice be not the juster title. You pique my curiosity extremely by the mention of that ancient MS., as there is nothing gives me greater Pleasure than the Simplicity of style and sentiment that is observable in the old English ballads. If aught could add to that Pleasure, it would be an opportunity of perusing them in your company at Leasowes, & pray do not think of publishing them untill you have given me that opportunity". In the same letter Shenstone included some stanzas from a version of the ballad he possessed. One stanza read:

His hair was like the threeds of gold
Shot frae the burning Sun,
His lips like roses dropping dew,
His breath was a perfume.

Above the last line of the stanza Shenstone wrote: "When as his (i.e. Sun's) race was run", and as a footnote to his interpolation added: "I wish you would mend this Rhime. 'Tis Pity &c." Percy replied: " I can think of no rhyme for Sun in the 14th stanza of the additions to Gil Morice

⁽⁶⁾Percy to Shenstone, Nov. 24, 1757. Brit. Mus. Mss. 28221. f.6v

but what if you find one for perfume lin. ult. Query?
 threeds of Gold drawn from Minerva's loom - or something
 infinitely better"⁽¹⁾. The version of the stanza finally
 printed in the Reliques was:

His hair was like the threeds of Gold,
 Drawne frae Minerva's loome
 His lipps like roses drapping dew,
 His breath was a' perfume.

Percy showed here a lack of sensitiveness to literary
 flavours which is unusual in him but common in most of the
 modernizers and adapters of the time. He seemed to have
 not the least qualm about putting Minerva's loom into an
 old Scottish popular ballad. His later emendations were
 usually more happy, and such an infelicitous patch must
 not be taken as typical of Percy's hand.

Apparently about this time both men were fiddling
 with The Gentle Herdsman and Edom of Gordon. In June, 1759,
 Shenstone wrote to Percy: "I have retouched and transcribed
 both the Gentle Herdsman and Edom of Gordon, long before
 your letter arrived ... Your supplemental Stanzas to the
 G. Herdsman must undoubtedly approach nearer to what was the
 reading, than those I have substituted, having not the
 final words to direct me. I will not send them you now,
 because I would multiply your Inducements to pass a Day or
 two at Leasowes at this season of the year"⁽²⁾.

⁽¹⁾ Shenstone to Percy, Jan. 4, 1758. Brit. Mus. Mss. 28221, f.7-9

⁽²⁾ Shenstone to Percy, June 1759 . Brit. Mus. Mss. 28221, f.24

Percy replied begging for a sight of the "improvements of Edom of Gordon, The Gentle Herdsman, etc." Shenstone answered: "Edom⁽¹⁾ of Gordon of which you desire a Copy, must receive great alterations towards the Close, before I can endure that you should see it, and as to the Herdsman, I will indeed send you my additional readings if you still desire them, tho' they can only afford you ample Reason to be perfectly satisfied with your own"⁽²⁾. In a later letter he added: "The old ballads I pretended to adjust cannot possibly appear with my consent ... They are corrected indeed, but that in a manner so very contrary to my present Sentiments, that I cannot endure to transcribe them as they are"⁽³⁾. Edom of Gordon Percy did not receive again until after Shenstone's death. He sent it for further correction to Lord Hailes with the statement: "I know not how far you will admit the alterations & enlargements: they were in some measure pointed out by my late friend Mr. Shenstone, who left among his papers some hints how & where he could wish the alterations might be made. If I have not succeeded in Scotifying the English stanzas, I beg your unsparing corrections"⁽⁴⁾.

That Shenstone's change of sentiment which induced him to hold back the ballads was not a change that

⁽¹⁾ Percy-Shenstone Correspondence. Brit. Mus. Mss. 28221, f.28

⁽²⁾ ibid, f.30

⁽³⁾ ibid, f.34

⁽⁴⁾ Percy to Hailes. Feb. 11, 1764. Brit. Mus. Mss. 32331, f.48



would demand the publication of untouched versions of the ballads can be seen in his later correspondence. On March 1, 1761, Shenstone wrote to Richard Graves and told him of Percy's plan of the Reliques, more or less stating that it was his own idea. "You have heard me speak of Mr. Percy; he is in treaty with Mr. James Dodsley for the publication of our best old ballads in three volumes. He has a large folio MS. of ballads, which he showed me, and which, with his own natural and acquired talents, would qualify him for the purpose as well as any man in England. I proposed the scheme for him myself, wishing to see an elegant edition and a good collection of this kind"⁽¹⁾. On September 24 of the same year he wrote to John McGowan, Writer to the Signet at Edinburgh, to give details of Percy's project and to ask McGowan for any ballads he might have. Then in a few sentences Shenstone made clear his attitude towards the antique and his part in the Reliques: "I am only afraid that his fondness for antiquity should tempt him to admit pieces that have no other sort of merit. However, he has offered me rejecting power, of which I mean to make considerable use"⁽²⁾. Shenstone did make "considerable use " of his rejecting power, determining to a large extent the contents of the work. Its final form was also his idea. ~~xxxxxxhavexxseenx~~

⁽¹⁾ Shenstone: Works, 1773. III. 363

⁽²⁾ Edinburgh Annual Register, 1809. p. 549. Reprinted in Nichols' Illustrations. VII. 220

Later, after the Reliques became a successful and standard work, Percy was by no means eager to share with Shenstone the credit for its conception. In the correspondence which he revised in 1772 a few tell-tale alterations occur. He opens one letter to Shenstone: "I rec'd the favour of yours & tho' you promise to write me another letter which is to contain farther Remarks on the plan of my intended publication ..."⁽¹⁾ The words "Remarks on the plan of" are inserted in different ink above a line crossed out. The blotted words, barely distinguishable, are "directions relating to the conduct of". Later in the same letter Percy wrote: "I wish you would [word completely blotted out and "criticize" written above in different ink] my Version." The same letter contains a great deal more blotting out, but unfortunately none of the original is decipherable. In an earlier letter Percy wrote begging for a visit, "and for your amusement here I will lay my [whole hoard" struck out and "old Folio Volume" written above in different ink]⁽²⁾ of ancient ballads before you". The blottings in the letters show that Percy was endeavouring to conceal the full amount of Shenstone's aid, and they suggest a strong reason for Percy's deliberate failure to preserve more of his own letters to Shenstone. In a note at the very

⁽¹⁾ Percy to Shenstone. Nov. 22, 1762. Brit. Mus. Mss. 28221, f. 54

⁽²⁾ Percy to Shenstone. Aug. 3, 1759. Brit. Mus. Mss. 28221, f. 23v

beginning of the collection of Shenstone letters Percy wrote : "N.B. When Mr. Shenstone died the Reliques had only been printed to the beginning of book three of what is now the third volume, but was then the first"⁽¹⁾. It was true that only part of the first volume had been printed, but the rest of the poetical contents, except for the Scottish pieces, were almost all selected and approved by Shenstone, and ready for the press.⁽²⁾

Immediately after Shenstone's death in 1763 Percy did not hesitate to acknowledge his debt. He wrote of his collaborator: "...to whose memory I intend to inscribe the whole collection, as being undertaken at his request, and the plan of it formed under his elegant superintendence"⁽³⁾. Once the Reliques became a standard work, as it did long before Percy's death, he was by no means so eager to share with Shenstone the credit of its conception. He might speak slightly of the work as a "youthful amusement", but his later willingness to assume all the credit for himself is as evident as his eagerness in the first preface to gather as many names as he could to bolster up his own small reputation. This later jealousy of Shenstone's share in the work was brought out when Richard Graves published his little volume "Recollections of some Particulars in the Life of the Late William Shenstone, Esq." (London, 1788).

⁽¹⁾ Brit. Mus. Mss. 28221, f.3

⁽²⁾ Percy to Hailes, Aug.30, 1763. Brit. Mus. Mss. 32331, f.33

⁽³⁾ Percy Memoranda. Brit. Mus. Mss. 32336. f.36v.

Graves mentioned Shenstone's "correcting and improving"^(a) Percy's collection, as one of the items of his later work. A few pages later Graves spoke of Percy's meeting with Shenstone: "Mr. Shenstone suggested to him the scheme of publishing his Reliques of Ancient Poetry , and, as he gratefully acknowledges greatly assisted him in that work; the dedication of which made Mr. Percy's merit known to the Northumberland family, whose patronage was infallible promotion, and Dr. Percy is now the learned and respectable Bishop of Dromore".^(a)

The sensitive Percy was naturally piqued at this slighting reference, and when his annoyance became known to Graves, he wrote to Percy, apologizing for his inaccuracy in stating the time when Shenstone and Percy first met, and for his supercilious reference to Percy's method of acquiring preferment. As for Shenstone's assistance in the Reliques, Graves was polite but did not take back his assertion: "In regard to the assistance which I supposed your Lordship to have received in the publication of your ancient poetry: I now also find by the date of your first acquaintance at the end of the year 1757, that from your remote residence in Northampton & Mr. Shenstone's frequent illness, it is impossible it would have been considerable; if I did not find this expressly acknowledged, under Mr. Shenstone's own hand,

^(a) Graves: Recollections... p.157

^(a) ibid, p.163

in a letter to myself; dated March 1, 1761, not long before his death"^(b). The letter to which Graves referred is quoted above. With Dr. Robert Anderson of Edinburgh Percy "allowed to be deposited [this] letter from Mr. Graves vindicating the Ep. from such misrepresentations as he had fallen into in his Recollections concerning the share which their common friend Mr. Shenstone was supposed to have had in the Reliques of Ancient Poetry".^(a) In the fourth edition of the Reliques Percy attempted to minimize Shenstone's aid. A footnote to the usual acknowledgement reads: "That the editor hath here not under-rated the assistance he received from his friend will appear from Mr. Shenstone's own letter to the Rev. Mr. Graves, dated March 1, 1761. See his works. vol. III, Letter CII. It is doubtless a great loss to this work that Mr. Shenstone never saw more than a third of one of these volumes as prepared for the press". Another of Percy's skilful equivocations. According to his own diary the second and third volumes were already well advanced at the time of Shenstone's death.^(c)

Much more important than the extent to which Percy followed Shenstone's advice is the question of what that advice really was. ~~The two men had~~ usually very

^(b) National Library of Scotland. Ms. 22.4.10. f.13

^(a) *ibid.* f.57

^(c) Percy Memoranda. Brit. Mus. Mss. 32336. f.36v.

similar literary tastes; both shared an interest in early literature, but Shenstone was an eighteenth century man of letters more than a lover of ballads, while in Percy a genuine appreciation of his materials was always present and occasionally drowned out all other considerations. The Reliques was padded with modern pieces, and the old poems were given a modern polish as a result of the pressure of Shenstone's ideas on Percy, whose honest qualms were soothed and argued away by the older poet. Shenstone constantly argued against the insertion of pieces that were, in his opinion, too antique: "... my only fear has been, that mere Antiquity should sometimes impose upon you in the Garb of merit. But I have said enough on this head, & I believe you are on your guard ... I should think it safer to defer the publication of such old Pieces as have rather more merit in the Light of Curiosity than Poetry (such as the tragick one of 'the Fight at Otterbourn' and the comick one of 'John the Reeve') till you have experienced the Publick's re⁽¹⁾ception of the first two Vols." Six months later he again felt it necessary to check Percy's love for the antique on its own score: "You will think it proper to insert something that comprizes the action of this great Champion Guy as well as those of King Arthur; and yet there is evidently not a single particle of poetical Merit in

⁽¹⁾ Shenstone to Percy. Oct. 1761. Brit, Mus. Mss. 28221, f.77

either of the Ballads. Once for all, it is extremely certain that an Overproportion of this Kind of Ballast will sink your vessel to the Bottom of the Sea. Therefore be on your guard in time! ... But I have perhaps harped on this string too Long ..."⁽¹⁾

Shenstone was, in addition, constantly arguing for the embellishment of the old poetry. Percy seems to have had some doubts about extensive changes, but Shenstone resolved them with suspicious ease:

"For my own part, I have ever considered your old MSS. as the noblest treasure in a Poet's hands; even as pure gold in dust or Ingots, which the Owner might either mint himself, or dispose of in the shape he found it, for the Benefit of other Artists - Remember I use the word Artists, - for if you publish these old pieces unimproved only, I consider them as not everyone's money, but as a prize merely for either Virtuosoos; or else the manufacturers of this kind of ware: the Poets namely. The Purchasers however, of this sort, will lie under a disadvantage not incident to the present owner; who possesses his treasure in secret, & not in common with all mankind. Quere then, whether you yourself chuse to wave both the trouble & the Credit that would accrue from such improvements as you are well able to bestow. I am really not sufficiently sanguine to dictate, on this Head; yet the Hints I throw out at times, & the different Lights in which I place things may be of some little use to you in your determination at Last. ...If you consider improved Copies as the standard or principal ones, & give them a first place, I do not see that you need hereby violate your purpose of arranging according to date - They may still rank as old Barons, ~~but~~ the robes they wear be ever so modern".⁽²⁾

⁽¹⁾ Shenstone to Percy. May 16, 1762. Brit. Mus. Mss. 28221, f.94
⁽²⁾ " " " Feb. 3, 1762. " " " " f.87

A postscript to this letter asked: "What say you to Fingal? ... What a treasure there for a modern Poet, before they were published". A half year before he had written: "Let the Liberties taken by the Translator of the Erse-Fragments be a Precedent for you. Many old Pieces without some alteration will do nothing, & with your amendments will be striking". But Shenstone objected to the inclusion of Celtic poetry in the Reliques, because of the necessity of explanatory notes: "... if it be the least necessary to add notes by way of explanation, One may readily enough ~~conclude~~ that they had better all be totally omitted"⁽⁶⁾.

How the textual changes were to be acknowledged was easily explained: "As to alterations of a word or two, I do not esteem it a point of Conscience to particularize them on this occasion. Perhaps when a whole Line or More is alter'd, it may be proper enough to give some Intimation of it. The Italick type may answer this purpose, if you do not employ it on other occasions. It will have the appearance of a modern Toe or Finger, which is allowably added to the best old Statues: And I think I should [rather struck out] always let the Publick imagine, that these were owing to Gaps rather than to faulty Passages"⁽⁷⁾. Shen-

⁽⁶⁾ Shenstone to Percy. Oct. 1, 1760. Brit. Mus. Mss. 28221, f. 50v
⁽⁷⁾ *ibid.*

stone would probably have put his rewriting of The Boy and the Mantle in the first class, though what he hoped would seem a "modern toe or finger" turned out to be a sore thumb. To clinch his point with Percy in favour of liberal editing Shenstone usually appealed to Percy's desire for the popular and commercial success of the work: "I am more fearful of your admitting what may not suit the Class that will be your principal Readers, than I am of your omitting a few good pieces, which may, at worst, be added to some future volume"⁽¹⁾.

The editorial policy that has made Percy's Reliques a byword of literary dishonesty and an easy target for abuse by later and more righteous editors was largely the result of Shenstone's part in the editing. Even after he died his influence remained: "... poor Shenstone, whose opinions have now acquired a kind of prophetic authority with me"⁽²⁾, wrote Percy to Farmer a year after Shenstone's death. Even apart from Shenstone's influence, Percy could never have been a Ritson; the temptation to insert a few words in the right place was always too strong for his itching fingers. Unfortunately, Percy himself destroyed those letters in which, to judge by Shenstone's replies, he had expressed his misgivings, but enough of the correspondence remains to show that if

⁽¹⁾ Shenstone to Percy. Oct. 1, 1760. Brit. Mus. Mss. 28221, f.50

⁽²⁾ Percy to Farmer. Feb. 28, 1764. Brit. Mus. Mss. 28222, f.37

he had had the courage to carry out his own ideas, his literary reputation, both during and after his lifetime, would have been more savoury. Certainly, the final work would have been much closer to justifying its title, as it was at Shenstone's insistence that the Celtic poetry was omitted and modern pieces included. Percy was, as his inadequate and misleading acknowledgements show, aware of the duty of an editor to point out the changes he had made in the original text. Unfortunately for Percy's reputation, his own business sense backed up Shenstone's advice, and the two together won the field.

Percy's other helpers gave him material for his book rather than advice, though most of them were far more competent than Shenstone. Lord Hailes became his most valuable prop after the death of Shenstone, and constituted the head of the Scottish office. He supplied Percy with notes to most of the Scottish songs and sent him many poems besides revising and partially writing the glossary.⁽¹⁾ It was Hailes who supplied Percy with information about Hardyknute.⁽²⁾ Percy relied on Hailes for all his information on Scottish ballads, and frequently asked him to

⁽¹⁾ Brit. Mus. Mss. 32331, f.25-30

⁽²⁾ Hardyknute, a fragment, one of the most famous and popular ballads of the eighteenth century, was a forgery of Lady Wardlaw, written about 1719, and published for the first time by Ramsay in 1724.

"Scotify" the English versions of ballads which had been originally Scottish. One little incident illustrates the dangerous path of an editor who does not completely understand his subject matter. Percy was lost in Middle Scots and had asked Hailes to explain some passages he did not understand. In reply to Hailes' information he wrote: "I thank you for condescending to explain to me Captain Montgomery's flyting with Polwart: but for your exposition I should have got into a scrape by printing ane baudy ballad without knowing it to be such".⁽¹⁾

From 1762 until the Reliques was published Percy kept up a regular correspondence with Richard Farmer, the learned commentator on Shakespeare. Farmer was a constant help in procuring books, digging up facts, and correcting Percy's essays, particularly the Essay on the Metre of Pierce Plowman. Farmer had no part in forming the literary policy of the work, but his background of learning made him a very useful as a research assistant.

With the exception of Edward Lye, who revised the glossary, Percy's other helpers were men who contributed to the contents, so that in the end Percy had a great amount of varied material at his disposal. He applied to Thomas Warton at Oxford, who transcribed several pieces for

⁽¹⁾Percy to Hailes. Jan. 7, 1763. Brit. Mus. Mss. 32331, f.13

him. Edward Capell, editor of Prolusions, loaned him rare copies of earlier collections.⁽¹⁾ He kept up a long correspondence with Evan Evans, the Welsh antiquarian, constantly urging Evans to complete and publish his Specimens.⁽³⁾ From Evans, Percy secured much information for his Essay on the Metrical Romances, and his Essay on the Origin of the English Stage,⁽²⁾ as well as several old Celtic poems, which, on Shenstone's advice, he did not use. John McGowan of Edinburgh, whom Shenstone had interested in the project, sent him, after three years delay when Percy's patience was well near exhausted, several fine old Scottish ballads. Of a Mr. Dicey of the Printing-Office in Bow Church Yard Percy wrote: "[He is] the greatest printer of Ballads in the Kingdom: he has promised me copies of all his old Stock Ballads ... as a specimen I have already rec'd over four score pieces from him, some of which I never saw before".⁽⁴⁾ Mr. Dicey, however, was not a well known literary man; so Percy felt no necessity for acknowledging his help in the preface.

These were Percy's main helpers. Goldsmith and Garrick are mentioned in the preface, and other members of Johnson's club, of which Percy was also a member, were

⁽¹⁾ Brit. Mus. Mss. 28222, f. 35 verso

⁽²⁾ " " " 32330, f. 52 ff.

⁽³⁾ Specimens of the Poetry of the Antient Welsh Bards, London, 1764

⁽⁴⁾ Brit. Mus. Mss. 28221, f. 69 verso.

probably consulted. The sheer quantity of the advice given him, together with its conflicting nature, was a strain on the ~~on the~~ young editor. To Farmer he complained: "I never consulted any two critics on the subject of selecting (and I have had the opinion of forty) who thought alike." ^(c) Percy, after Shenstone's death, became his own final judge of the ballads, and the responsibility for the inclusion, exclusion, or adaptation of the wealth of material that poured into Easton Maudit must be his, though probably few books at publication could claim the assistance of so many eminent literary figures.

Judged by modern standards of anthology making, the contents of Percy's Reliques form a strange medley. The first edition contained 176 pieces in all, very few of which were really "ancient". The great bulk of the collection consisted of sixteenth and seventeenth century pieces, with genuinely early poetry limited to the ballads and romances, for which only a vaguely approximate date can be given. Of works by known authors, a poem by Skelton, one by Stephen Hawes, Henryson's Robyn and Makyne, and two slight pieces erroneously attributed to Chaucer comprised the sum of his pre-Elizabethan pieces. He included 111 ballads in all. In his choice of poems for the collection Percy carefully fought shy of anything that might smack too dangerously of the obsolete. He knew that he was handling a captious public, and he accordingly donned gloves, though it is evident in his correspondence that his literary conscience gave him moments of compunction. In a letter to Lord Hailes he remarked: "The

^(c)Percy to Farmer. Feb.28,1764. Brit Mus.Mss.28222, f.37

Compositions of James 1st of Scotland are rather too prolix for my plan"⁽¹⁾. He had originally said "too obsolete", but obsolete was carefully crossed out and prolix put in its place - an illuminating emendation. Percy went on to say that otherwise he would have used James' Lamentation, by which he meant the King's Quair, which Warton had brought to his attention. He finally made some sort of compromise with himself, and in a subsequent letter we find him saying that if the Reliques ~~was~~ successful, he might publish the more ancient and longer poems "that are much more valuable as well upon account of their poetical merit, as the curious picture they give us of ancient manners ..."⁽²⁾

No fewer than 43 of the pieces are of known authorship, including works by such poets as Marlowe, Shakespeare, Jonson, Lovelace, Carew, and Dryden. Several modern pieces were included, some even written in the years immediately preceding the Reliques, but they are squeezed into some sort of consistency with the general plan, in that they are ostensibly imitations of the ancient ballad form. The inclusion of contemporary poetry was due to the canny editor's fear of going too fast for the public, though it was Shenstone who first suggested the arrangement by which the leavening modern pieces could be spread judiciously throughout the whole work: "Quere. What if you proceed from old to newer ballads in

⁽¹⁾Percy to Hailes, Dec. 2, 1762. Brit. Mus. Add. Mss. 32331. f.9

⁽²⁾Percy to Hailes, Sep. 8, 1763. Brit. Mus. Add. Mss. 32331. f.37

every distinct volume supposing your improved Copies to appear towards the close & there be first refer'd to the original Copies? This would at least prevent the first volume from being too much loaded with obsolete pieces, which were not agreeable to the general Taste - And So, make First, second & third series, in every distinct volume. Consider well with yourself, the advantages this would give you. I think I begin to like it".⁽¹⁾

The form in which the Reliques finally appeared was exactly in accordance with the advice of Shenstone. Each of the three volumes was sub-divided into three separate books, each book arranged chronologically "to show the gradual improvement of the English language and poetry". The poems were prefaced by short introductions containing pertinent annotations, ~~and~~ ^{with} statements, usually inaccurate and misleading, concerning the sources for the text. The superiority of the Reliques over previous publications, lay, more than in anything else, in these notes and in the introductory essays with which Percy illustrated his texts. He made the Reliques neither a learned nor a popular work and skillfully avoided falling between two stools, by making his critical apparatus not primarily for the scholar but for the general reader. At the same time, the very association of notes and dissertations with early literature

⁽¹⁾ Shenstone to Percy, Feb. 3, 1762. Brit. Mus. Add. Mss. 28221. f.87

rescued it from becoming a mere amusement among dilettante literary circles, while the unpedantic tone of the whole work kept its contents from becoming the exclusive property of scholars - the two extremes of danger which more than once during the century threatened the life of the recovered literature. If the literature he presented was not palatable of itself, Percy could justify it as "exhibiting the customs and opinions of remote ages", and also as a source of later and more highly esteemed work. Thus he pointed out the connection of several of the ballads with the poetry of Shakespeare and Chaucer. For example, he held that The Marriage of Gawaine furnished Chaucer with the plot of the Wife of Bath's tale. He discussed the Robin Hood legend, doubting the tradition identifying that popular hero with the Earl of Huntington.

Percy's four dissertations included in the Reliques were all on pre-Elizabethan literature, in conspicuous contrast to the poetry, of which very little was genuinely early. The first dissertation, An Essay on the Ancient Minstrels was Percy's most ill-fated piece of writing. Throughout, Percy strove by quotation and deduction to place the ancient minstrels on as high a social and professional plane as he could, and to show that it was not until the Elizabethan age that they really became degraded. His first sentence: "The Minstrels seem to have

been the genuine successors of the ancient Bards, who united the arts of Poetry and Music, and sung verses to the harp, of their own composing", became a battle ground of the antiquarians, and later brought on his head the fury of Ritson. This essay was most drastically revised in the successive editions of the Reliques, and in the fourth edition Percy tacitly confessed himself in error. In the essay On The Ancient Metrical Romances, etc., with which he introduced his third volume, he derived Romances from the historical songs of the Scalds of the North, and traced their growth and later appearance in France and England. He gave a list of such Romances as he had found in extant manuscripts, and urged their publication, a task performed by Joseph Ritson, with ironic deference to Percy, in 1802. His Essay on the Metre of Pierce Plowman's Visions gave no more information on the poem than had Thomas Warton's discussion of the same subject in 1754.⁽¹⁾ Although Percy said, "of this work I have now before me four editions in black letter quarto", the only four lines he quoted from Piers Plowman were the same lines that Warton had quoted in his Observations on the Faerie Queen. The essay had little to do with Piers Plowman; it was primarily concerned with metrics and was brought in merely to illustrate two pieces in the old alliterative measure⁽²⁾

⁽¹⁾ Observations On The Faerie Queen Of Spenser, London, 1754.
pp. 89n-92n

⁽²⁾ Little John Nobody and The Complaint of Conscience

taken from the folio manuscript. His dissertation On the Origin of the English Stage⁶⁾ owed much to earlier essays on the same subject, but this was the first time so much information had been collected into one account. That Percy's essays were not wholly accurate or definitive is beside the point. They furnished a new approach to early poetry, and enabled much of it to be read with an understanding hitherto not possible. Combined, they were nearer to a history of early literature than anything yet published.

Percy's opinion of the intrinsic merit of the early literature he was bringing to notice helps to illumine and explain his treatment of the material. But this opinion is not easy to discover. Throughout his life Percy was always influenced, at least in his literary tactics, by what the other man said. In his printed words it is frequently ^{difficult} to pierce through the mass of cant which he thought it necessary to employ in order to placate the non-enthusiasts, to the core of honest feeling beneath. Even in his correspondence, of which we have a large mass scattered among various libraries, he rarely discarded his defensive attitude. He was always cautious, never impulsive; in all, the last man one would pick as the leader of a great fundamental change in literary thought.

We cannot accept as wholly sincere the attitude which Percy displays in his preface to the Reliques. He was too deferential to the taste of his age, too eager to please

⁶⁾ Cf. p. 239 for a discussion of this essay.

men of influence, to announce any break with the immediate past. So he was fulsome in his apologies for his material: "As some of them [the poems] are of great simplicity, and seem to have been merely written for the people, he [Percy] was long in doubt, whether, in the present state of improved literature, they could be deemed worthy of the attention of the public. ... Accordingly such specimens ... [were] selected as either show the gradation of our language, exhibit the progress of popular opinions, display the peculiar manners and customs of former ages, or throw light on the earlier classical poets". Again: "In a polished age, like the present, I am sensible that many of these reliques ... will require great allowance to be made for them. Yet have they, for the most part, a pleasing simplicity and many artless graces, which, in the opinion of no mean critics, have been thought to compensate for the want of higher beauties". In other words Percy seemed to doubt whether the man^o of taste could stomach his offering, but he selected such pieces as might afford nourishment, if not pleasure to the palate, and then proffered to the man of taste, in the form of selections from modern poets and in his own emendations to the ancient poems, a sugar-coated pill as an aid to digestion.

In speaking of the contemporary poems⁽¹⁾ he included

⁽¹⁾These were: Winifrida, Jenny Dawson, The Witch of Wokey, Bryan and Pereene, Gentle River, Alcanzor and Zayda, Hardyknute, The Braes of Yarrow, Admiral Hosier's Ghost, Lucy and Colin, and Margaret's Ghost.

Percy seemed to conquer his timidity for a moment; for though he expected the modern pieces to balance the rudeness of the more ancient poems, "yet perhaps the palm will be frequently due to the old strolling Minstrels". This is the one indication in the preface of Percy's genuine attitude towards the old ballads. At the conclusion of the preface he goes back to apology: "To prepare ...the parcel of Old Ballads ... has been the amusement of now ant then a vacant hour amid the leisure and retirement of rural life, and hath only served as a relaxation from graver studies". The pose of the leisure hour occupation was a literary convention of the day, particularly with the antiquaries, and at times was carried to ridiculous lengths. Works obviously demanding an enormous amount of research and enthusiasm were nonchalantly introduced over the shoulder as the amusement of an idle hour. That the Reliques was but a "slight amusement" used as a "relaxation from severer studies" was the pose Percy adopted for practically his whole life. Even with Lord Hailes, a fellow antiquarian, Percy felt it necessary to keep it up. After a long letter full of minute inquiries about some Scottish ballads he added: "Tho I bestow upon a few old poems, those idle moments, which some of my grave brethren pass away over a sober game of whist: It

does not engross the whole of my attention".⁽¹⁾

This was Percy's public attitude, assumed doubtless out of deference to the prevailing winds of the times. The fundamental inconsistency in his behavior lay in the fact that he could spend years of care and labour on an insignificant and unworthy object. His correspondence with his helpers is permeated with an attitude of genuine respect for his material. Writing to George Paton in 1769, he said: "What I chiefly want to recover are those fine old historical songs, which are preserved in the memories of old people"⁽²⁾. This statement is apt to give a wrong impression of Percy's methods. Not for him was the tramping of miles of country roads, the hob-nobbing with village people in the inn, the patient prodding of oldest inhabitants, in which Scott and his group revelled. Percy's pleasure in ballads came from their antiquity and from the fact that they possessed vital qualities missing in contemporary literature. That they were the branch of literature closest to the people was immaterial, for Percy was a lover of books rather than his fellow men. He had not the bonhomie, so strong in Scott which would enable him to fraternize with the people in whose memory the ballads still lived. It was easier for

⁽¹⁾ Percy to Hailes, Jan. 25, 1763. Brit. Mus. Add. Mss. 32331 f.19

⁽²⁾ Letters from Bishop Percy etc. to George Paton. p.7

him to search through old manuscripts than to talk to village people.

In regard to Percy's attitude towards the contents of the Reliques we must remember that some of the poems he included were poor literature and genuinely merited apology. The truth seems to be that he saw in the old ballads splendid remnants of the romantic past, containing scraps of genuine poetic feeling that needed only the skilful modern hand to shape. And Percy loved the old ballads all the more after he had improved them.

It is doubtful if the age would have received the same collection with the same approval had it been edited by a man with the editorial standards of Capell. Percy used Capell's text for The Notbrowne Mayde, the one ballad in Prolusions. With the others, particularly those he found only in his folio manuscript, he took unrestricted liberties. How great these liberties were was not revealed for over 100 years, when Hales and Furnival edited the folio manuscript. They found, for example, that the ballad The Child of Elle, which in the folio manuscript was a fragment of only 39 lines, became by Percy's skilful hand a full poem of 200 lines. Even so, much of the original was left out, and much that was included was altered. And this ballad was by no means an isolated instance. The Heir of Line in the folio was a poem of 125 lines, while in the Reliques

it blossomed out into 240 lines, although it was complete in the original version. It is a comment on the eighteenth century literary mind that whenever specimens of early literature were brought up to date, openly as in the case of modernizations of Chaucer, covertly as in Percy's refurbishings of the ballads, the result was always considerably longer than the original.

Percy patched, refitted, and gānerally dressed up his *Cinderella* before he brought her out in public. The acknowledgements he made of his own "corrections" were quite inadequate. To Lord Hailes he wrote in 1763: "Inclosed is a new edition of the Child of Elle: with a few aukard [sic], imperfect efforts to tag it with a conclusion: perfect and improve them for me. The inclosed is my only copy; be pleased therefore, when corrected by your elegant pen, to return it"⁽¹⁾. Percy did more than tag the poem with a conclusion. From his introductory remarks to other poems, the reader would judge that a touch here and there to correct utter unintelligibility, and the addition of an occasional supplemental stanza was the extent of his changes. His explanations in the preface are inadequate and misleading at best:

"The desire to be accurate has perhaps seduced him [Percy] into too minute and trifling an exactness; and in pursuit of information he may have been drawn into many a petty and frivolous research. It was however necessary

(1) Percy to Hailes, Nov. 3. 1763. Brit. Mus. Mss. 32331. f.41

to give some account of the old copies, tho' often for the sake of brevity one or two of these only are mentioned, where^(a) yet assistance was received from several. Where anything was altered that deserved particular notice, the passage is distinguished by two inverted "commas". And the editor has endeavoured to be faithful, as the imperfect state of his materials would admit: for these old popular Rhimes have, as might be expected, been handed down to us with less care, than any other writings in the world."

Actually, he practically rewrote many of the pieces, and it must be recorded as a tribute to his poetic powers that it was not until the originals were brought to light that the extent of his changes became known. Percy might be as apologetic as he chose in his preface when he spoke of these old songs, but no better proof can be had that he loved them and steeped himself in them than that he was able to reproduce the language, cadences, and spirit of the originals, in slightly more polished form to be sure. The deftness of Percy's hand in some of the poems can be seen illustrated in The Legend of King Arthur, which he included in his third volume. As Kinge: Arthurs Death in the folio manuscript it is in a chaotic condition, with several stanzas misplaced. The original of the folio version has recently been unearthed,^(a) and shows that in his alterations Percy gave his recon-

^(a) More often many were mentioned when few were used.

^(a) C.B. Millican. The Original of the Ballad "Kinge: Arthurs Death" in the Percy Folio Ms. P.M.L.A. 46.1020

struction of the text the exact continuity of the earlier version, which he had never seen.

Despite the amount of Percy's "emendations" he rarely lost his sense of literary fitness. When less skilful hands than his own tampered with the old ballads he did not hesitate to prefer the crude originals. Shenstone refurbished for him The Boy and the Mantle, with the result that the poem was barely recognizable. Even Percy balked. He printed the poem "verbatim from the MS", but added to the headnote: "Such Readers, as have no relish for pure antiquity, will find a more modern Copy of this Ballad at the end of the Volume". At the end of the volume Shenstone's version appeared, "as revised and altered by a modern hand". Percy's objections to inept modernizations of ballads can always be traced to his literary sense, rather than to any feeling of reverence for the surviving texts. It was one thing to tamper with a ballad so that the whole literary tone was unobtrusively raised; it was another to insert passages, which, however good in themselves, were conspicuously out of harmony with the original text.

It is important to an understanding of Percy to notice the distinction he drew between the anonymous body of ballads and romances, and poetry of known authorship. All the alterations of any extent are confined to

the anonymous poetry, and most of those, though not all, to the pieces Percy took from the folio manuscript. This distinction was not drawn solely because of the danger of being found out, as Percy's own naive confession in the preface to the Five Pieces might lead us to think. There was in the eighteenth century an honest, and, after all, a perfectly natural feeling that popular literature, the property of the people, had no authentic text, and that a graceful emendation was as authentic and authoritative as a text which had been at the mercy of ^{the} peoples' memory for centuries. This view was brought forward again and again throughout the century in answer to the Ritsonian insistence on faithful texts even for scraps of street ballads. It was never actually stated by Percy except in private letters, and then only late in life, but the reviewers for the periodicals and many of the antiquarians themselves did it for him. With poetry of known authorship the case was different; here was a definite text, which was rarely meddled with except openly in the case of modernizations or translations.

In ~~his~~ correspondence, even with men intimately connected with the Reliques, ~~Percy~~ always sidled a little wherever he mentioned his alterations of the original texts. Writing to Hailes, he said: " You will pardon me, if I suspect that they [Edom of Gordon, etc. which Hailes had

edited) received some beauties in passing thro' your hands. This was not only an allowable freedom (if they did) but absolutely necessary to render them worth attention. You will hence infer that I take the same liberties myself; I do: when it seems wanting, and in that case I mention it in my introduction, without any scruple. And when the original reading contains anything peculiar I retain it in the margin." Throughout this passage he is a little too coy and self-conscious to be sincere. In the ~~same~~ letter he continued: "In this packet you will find one or two other ballads from my MS. Collection some of which I take to have been originally Scottish, but altered and corrupted by vulgar Harpers or Ballad-singers: It were to be wished some of them could be revised and the ancient Scotticisms restored by Conjecture: And should any improvement either in sentiment or expression occur, I should not scruple to insert it, provided it were not inconsistent with the general plan or style of the Poem"⁽¹⁾. A decade later, writing to George Paton, he commented on some of the songs collected by David Herd: "Most of them contain charming hints, which might give occasion to beautiful songs, if supplied and filled up ... I think I could fill up the breaches of some of them myself ..." It⁽²⁾

⁽¹⁾ Percy to Halles, Jan. 7, 1763. Brit. Mus. Mss. 32351, f.14-15

⁽²⁾ Letters from Bishop Percy etc. to George Paton. p.46-47

was not until later in the century when his policy was loudly berated by Ritson, that Percy, by his few flustered remarks revealed an awareness of the real impropriety of his work. What qualms he had during the preparation of the book were resolved by Shenstone and by a consideration of the advisability of retouching from the business point of view, for Percy was always an astute business man. There is no necessity for us to choose here between the legend of Percy the unscrupulous Judas of the ballads, and Percy the first great militant champion of Romanticism. It is unnecessary to subscribe to one or the other picture in order to explain his actions; all we need remember is that Percy was a child of his century and that he was human.

From the time that Johnson and Shenstone first spurred him to work on the Reliques, Percy was nervously fearful of the public reception of his work. At the very beginning of his labours Shenstone had to reassure him not only that the world would not look upon him simply as a ballad-monger, but that the work would be a popular success. Late in 1760 he wrote: "There is no room that I can see to question the reception that your Work is like to meet with. If I have any talent at Conjecture, ALL People of Taste thro'out the Kingdom will rejoice to see a judicious, a correct, & elegant collection of such Pieces". Dodsley, the publisher, had some fears, and for a few months in 1761 withdrew from the agreement, but once

^(c) Shenstone to Percy. Nov. 10, 1760. Brit. Mus. Mss. 28221, f. 52

more was persuaded to publish the work, probably, though we have no positive evidence, after Shenstone the mutual friend had intervened. The difference arose because Dodsley was unwilling to meet Percy's terms. The fear for the reception of the work was undoubtedly, as Percy's later correspondence shows, the principal force that inclined the young editor to accept Shenstone's advice on ~~the~~ how to form "a judicious, correct, and elegant collection."

When the long delayed work was finally in the hands of the booksellers, Percy trembled in fear of the periodical reviewers.⁽¹⁾ He eagerly read every notice or comment that came to him. His letters to his correspondents were timidly anxious. What do they think of the work at Oxford? at Cambridge? After the manner of eighteenth century writers Percy sent a copy of his Reliques to most of the influential literary men. Walpole wrote a highly enthusiastic letter of thanks.⁽²⁾ Thomas Warton wrote: "I think you have opened a new field of Poetry, and supplied many new and curious Materials for the history and Illustration of antient English Literature ... At Oxford it is a favourite work".⁽³⁾ Percy's letters to his other friends never failed to mention such compliments. The reviews re-

⁽¹⁾ Percy to Farmer. Feb. 10, 1765. Brit. Mus. Mss. 23222, f. 47

⁽²⁾ Brit. Mus. Mss. 32329, f. 24

⁽³⁾ Brit. Mus. Mss. 32329, f. 28

assured him further, and the steady sale of the work began. A month after the publication he wrote to Farmer with frank delight: "Dodsley has already disposed of above 600 copies: & begins to look forward toward a new Edition".⁽¹⁾

The critics of the ~~the~~ periodicals seem to have been disarmed by the imposing list of names in Percy's preface, for the Reliques was received in a surprisingly friendly manner compared with the reception of preceding and subsequent collections of a similar kind. The first notice came in the Critical Review for February 1765.⁽²⁾ The long review was most generous. "One can scarcely peruse this work without imagining that he sees the Genius of ancient English poetry bowing the head in approbation of the editor's labours. The whole ... forms an ethic history of our ancestors ... delineated by the truest pencil, that of Nature: and however homely her strokes may sometimes be, the resemblance is always just, and therefore pleasing". The reviewer is not disturbed by his suspicion of a modern hand in some of the ballads. "If any modern insertions have crept into these ballads, they are like those reparations or supplements which we have known bestowed by eminent sculptors upon old statues in which the modern from

⁽¹⁾ Percy to Farmer. Brit. Mus. Mss. 28222, f. 51

⁽²⁾ Critical Review. February, 1765. pp. 119-30

the ancient hand is scarcely, if at all, discernible". This same figure had been used by Shenstone to Percy, and Percy himself used it in exactly the same way several years later. The review concluded with an even more definite commendation of Percy's methods. "Would men of learning and abilities follow this editor's example in investigating and illustrating ancient beauties, instead of altering, and sometimes mangling them by affected hyper-criticisms; the present improved state of learning gives us room to believe that some of the rough diamonds might, by genius, be polished into lustre, and become brilliant ornaments to the British drama!"

(v)

Neither the Gentleman's Magazine nor the Monthly Review ^(a) was quite so enthusiastic, but both notices were distinctly favourable. The former sensed the unsatisfied taste to which the collection would cater. "The collection will please, persons that have a genuine taste for poetry, chiefly as an object of curiosity; here and there, however, will be found some approaches to harmony, and here and there some poetical beauties of a superior kind. There is a class of readers, and of writers too, that profess themselves to be admirers of simplicity, to delight in the stanza of Spenser, and to prefer both our language and versification in their rudiments to the correct elegance of later times.

© Gentleman's Magazine. April, 1765. pp.179-83

© Monthly Review. April, 1765. pp.241-253

To these gentlemen this work will afford great pleasure, setting curiosity aside." The Monthly Review did not censure Percy for his emendations but contrasted the simplicity and straight-forwardness of the ancient ballads with the pompous circumlocutions of the modern additions, to the detriment of the modern editors. "We are far from thinking, however, with certain tasteless Readers, that there is no merit in the compositions themselves; on the contrary, we find in many of them that pleasing simplicity, and those artless graces, which, in the opinion of Dryden, Addison, and other judicious critics, were thought to compensate for the want of superior beauties."

The Reliques came into the world well armed against attack, but found the world pleased to receive it. Both the professional reviewers and the literary men of the day applauded Percy's work. The reading public took to it even more eagerly. An unauthorized edition was printed in Dublin the following year. A small selection from the work was published at Göttingen in 1767, the same year that Dodsley printed a second edition, which, slightly enlarged,⁽¹⁾ and revised, incorporated the new information which had been brought to light by the publication of the first edition. Early in 1767 a Rev. Mr. Cole wrote to Percy⁽²⁾

⁽¹⁾ Percy added four new pieces: Jephthah Judge of Israel, Jealous Tyrant of the Mind, L'Amour et Glycere, and The Golden Mean.

⁽²⁾ Brit Mus. Mss. 5285, f.5-7

giving him information about the date and authorship of many of the pieces, in time for Percy to make additional notes in his appendix. The Essay on the Ancient Minstrels was partially rewritten, as the result of a criticism read by Samuel Pegge before the Society of Antiquaries at London.⁽¹⁾ Percy resented this first formal piece of unfavourable criticism,⁽²⁾ but it was only a foretaste of what was to come. The history of the fortunes of the Reliques during the rest of the century, and the continued, though less fruitful, labours of its editor will be traced in the remaining chapters of this study.

⁽¹⁾ Percy to Farmer. Oct. 22, 1766. Brit. Mus. Mss. 28222, f.70v.

⁽²⁾ Archaeologia: II.100-106

III

Gray and Hurd

Although the greatest fruits of the revival were not seen in creative literature until the turn of the century, from the seventeen-fifties on there was a steady, if slender stream of poetry capitalizing the the inspiration of the recovered literature. Most of these early Romanticists - we must call them that - were the fifth-raters, the men who, lacking ideas themselves, are always alert to find sources of fresh ready-made ideas before they become the property of the crowd. These were the men who flooded the periodicals with ballad imitations after the publication of the Reliques. But Thomas Gray was before these, eight years before Percy, even before Ossian. Gray was one of the very few men in the antiquarian movement who could appreciate early literature both as a scholar and an enthusiast. All too frequently the scholar was interested only in the research involved, and the enthusiast only in the work of other people. Gray's correspondence, and his little bits of criticism of early literature, as well as his poetry, show that his enthusiasm for older poetry was spontaneous and unashamed, although he did not escape all his century's misconceptions concerning it. The supposed medieval freedom from the rules of art charmed

him, as when^① he thought it "an advantage [to Dante] to have been produced in a rude age of strong and uncontrolled passions, when the muse was not checked by refinement and the fear of criticism"; while on the other hand, he was pleased that the ballad Gil Morice obeyed ~~xxx~~ the rules of Aristotle. Writing to Mason in 1757, he said: "I have got the old Scotch ballad (Gil Morice) on which Douglas was founded. It is divine ... Aristotle's best rules are observed in it in a manner which shews that the author never heard of Aristotle. It begins in the fifth act of the play. You may read two-thirds through without guessing what it is about; and yet, when you come to the end, it is impossible not to understand the whole story. I send you the first two verses ..."^②

Gray's first poem based on his interest in early literature was The Bard, printed in 1757 on Horace Walpole's press at Strawberry Hill. This poem declaimed by a Welsh bard before flinging himself from

① Gray: Letters, ed. Tovey. II.286

② The most successful play of the eighteenth century. Written by John Home, a minister of Edinburgh.

③ Gray: Letters. I.335-336

the top of a precipice to escape from the general massacre of Bards ordered by Edward I, was apparently inspired by Gray's Celtic studies, which engaged so much of his attention in his later life. The idea of The Bard was taken from Carte's History of England.⁽¹⁾ The tradition of the massacre,⁽²⁾ which is now no longer held valid, was confirmed for Gray by a letter from Evan Evans, the Welsh antiquarian, to Percy, who showed the letter to Gray.⁽³⁾ Gray's knowledge of Celtic antiquity was so highly regarded that even Evans was pleased to have him see and criticize much of his work on the Specimens of the Poetry of the Ancient Welsh Bards in manuscript before its publication in 1764. Gray's Celtic poems, The Triumph of Owen, The Death of Hoel, and the fragments Caradoc and Conan were all versifications of pieces in Evans' Specimens, which Gray had seen in manuscript.

Gray's enthusiasm was naturally heightened when in 1760 he received from Walpole two specimens of

⁽¹⁾ Carte: History of England. 3 vols. London, 1747-55. II.196

⁽²⁾ Cf. Thomas Stephens: Literature of the Kymry. 2nd ed. p.93ff.

⁽³⁾ Percy to Evans. Oct.15, 1761. Brit. Mus. Mss. 32330, f.26

Erse poetry, bits of the coming Ossian. He seems never to have convinced himself ~~himself~~ that Macpherson's fragments were forged, nor to have completely convinced himself that they were genuine. In his last judgment on the subject he wrote, "I admire nothing but Fingal ... yet I still remain in doubt about the authenticity of these poems, though inclining rather to believe them genuine in spite of the world. Whether they are inventions of antiquity, of a modern Scotchman, either case is to me alike unaccountable. Je m'y pers"^(b). Gray's inability to accept Ossian as a modern work was all the more strange because Macpherson was unmistakably influenced by Gray's own Celtic poem. ^(a) The Bard had a vogue of its own, but by no means its most minor role was to prepare the literary public for Ossian. An anonymous metrical version of a fragment of Ossian published in the Scots Magazine as early as July, 1760, had for its subtitle: "A piece in the taste of the celebrated Mr. Gray". But thereafter such pieces looked back, not to Gray, but to the flashier Ossian.

Gray was too much the scholar to be left out of the real work of the revival. When the British Museum was officially opened in January, 1759, he was one of its first and steadiest ^{readers} ~~customers~~, and for about the next two

^(b) Gray's Letters. ed. Tovey. II.249-50

^(a) J.S. Smart: James Macpherson. p.101

years became a diligent student of early English poetry. Warburton had given Gray a sketch of Pope's classification of the English poets, and Gray conceived the idea of writing a history of English poetry himself. He worked at the Museum, copying a good deal in his own hand, including Gawin Douglas's Palace of Honour, and writing chapters or parts of chapters for the proposed history. These bits of the history include Gray's observations on English metre and rhyme, distributed through five short essays, and remarks on the poems of John Lydgate. In his observations on metre and rhyme, he dimly anticipated Tyrwhitt's historic discussion of Chaucer's versification, but, more than that, he began his discussion with the Saxon times, quoted seven^{lines} of Piers Plowman and gave a description of the poem taken from the first edition. He frequently mentioned, though with very slight discussion, Gower, Barclay, Occleve, Gawin Douglas, and Lyndsay. He treated them not as barbarians, but as poets whose work deserved study and respect. His essay on Lydgate is indicative of Gray's feeling for the older poets. Lydgate was given higher praise than later critics have felt able to bestow. Gray would place him "among the greatest poets", and though

© Metrum. Observations on English Metre, on the Pseudo-Rythmus, on Rhyme, and on the poems of Lydgate. In Gray's Works. ed. Gosse. London, 1884. vol I. They were first printed by T.J. Mathias in his edition of Gray's prose works in 1814.

he falls below Chaucer, he has "frequently a stiller kind of majesty both in thought and expression".

The history was never completed - it would be fair to say that it was never started in ^aer~~n~~est - and when in April, 1770, he heard from Hurd about Warton's project, he placed his material, as well as the brief tentative outline at Warton's disposal. Warton made no use of Gray's notes, because he was already well started on his own work, which was on a different plan from that of Gray or Pope.

Gray's studies were not wasted, for his Norse poems sprang directly from his work on the history. The Fatal Sisters and the Descent of Odin in the MSS. of the poems bear the date 1761, but they were not published until 1768, when they came out with a note connecting them directly with the history. In this note Gray said that in the introduction to the history "he meant to have produced some specimens of the style that reigned in ancient times among the neighboring nations, or those who had subdued the greater part of this island, and were our progenitors: the following three imitations are part of them"⁶. The three imitations were The Fatal Sisters, Descent of Odin, and the Triumph of Owen. The smaller fragments of the same sort

⁶Gosse: Gray. p.160

discovered among Gray's papers and printed by Mason should probably also be assigned to the early years of the seventh decade when he was working at the Museum and also revising the manuscript of Evan Evans' Specimens.

Gray's interest in old Norse literature, like Percy's, can be traced directly to Mallet's work, which Percy translated as Northern Antiquities. Writing to Mason in 1758 about Caractacus, Gray acknowledged his interest in the work. "I am pleased with the Gothic Elysium. Do you think I am ignorant about that, or the hell before, or the twilight? I have been there and seen it all in Mallet's Introduction to the History of Denmark (it is in French), and many other places." Gray probably knew very little, if any, old Norse, and was forced to rely on second-hand sources for his materials.

Considerable as was Gray's immediate influence in helping to bring into English letters the medieval aspect of Romanticism, it was but a fraction of what it might have been, had he carried out the tasks he began,

⁽¹⁾ Gray: Letters. ed. Tovey. II.13

⁽²⁾ Cf. Prof. Kittredge's Gray's Knowledge of Old Norse in the appendix to W.L. Phelps' Selections from Gray, Boston, 1894.

or promptly published his finished works. His Bard influenced both Macpherson in writing Ossian, and the reading public in accepting Ossian. The unwritten history of English poetry might have focussed popular attention on medieval literature a decade before Warton was to accomplish the task. Moreover, Gray's prestige as a poet and scholar was powerful enough to have given the new movement an immediate critical respectability. His backwardness about publishing his work conceals what would otherwise be his right to be regarded as one of the earliest influences in the revival. Even his Norse poems were not published until Percy had paved the way with the Five Runic Pieces in 1763. But the Norse poems appealed to the imagination of his generation in a way Percy's prose versions never could, as the number of imitations of Gray's ^{odes} in the minor poetry of the rest of the century ⁽³⁾ amply testifies.

The effect of Gray's studies on himself was even more pronounced than the effect on his contemporaries. From the time that he wrote The Bard, Gray's mind seized eagerly on fragments of ancient poetry. His study of the old English poets in the British Museum and his reading of Norse mythology doubled the stimulation he had felt when

⁽³⁾ For an exhaustive discussion of these, see F.E. Farley's Scandinavian Influences on the English Romantic Movement. Boston, 1903.

he first read the old ballads of Gil Morice and Chevy-Chase in 1757. Edmund Gosse says that Gray " began to feel, just as the power of writing verse was leaving him, or seemed to be declining, that the deepest chords of his nature had never yet been struck"⁽¹⁾. At any rate, from the time when Gray first looked back to the past, what little poetry he wrote was Romantic, Romantic in the sense that it had the distant and wildly colourful mythology of Scandinavia or the early literature of Britain for its inspiration.

In his own lifetime, Gray, as we can see in his letters, was directly as well as indirectly powerful in stimulating the new movement. He put what material he had on old English poetry at the disposal of Warton; he assisted Evan Evans in editing the Specimens; he worked over, and finally whipped into slightly more presentable shape Mason's Caractacus; he aided Dr. Beattie in polishing up the first part of The Minstrel. More than anything else, Gray showed that a poet could possess all the elegance and refinement of the century and yet be attracted to the literature of more vigorous times even to the extent of imitating it in his own poetry. His personality somewhat mitigated the effect of Johnson's pronouncement that "A mere antiquarian is a rugged being"⁽²⁾. Dr. Johnson did not

⁽¹⁾ Gosse: Gray. p.149-50

⁽²⁾ Boswell: Life of Johnson. ed. G.B.Hill. III.278

exaggerate the opinion on his side; at the end of the century there was still a strong feeling in some quarters that an enthusiasm for early literature went with a tendency to eat peas with a knife. There is a supercilious tone about the criticism of antiquarian literature which seems as much social as literary. It was against this feeling that Gray's name was most powerful. The serene, gracious poet did much to counteract the effect on the cautious of snarling Ritson and blustering Pinkerton.

One other poet, William Collins, must be mentioned with Gray, as seeing the possibilities of the crude and barbarous while living in a refined age.^(a) Collins' Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland; Considered as the Subject of Poetry; Inscribed to Mr. John Home was written in 1749, several years before Gray's poems, but was not published until 1788. Dr. Alexander Carlyle of Edinburgh tells the story of the loss and recovery of the poem.^(b) The poem had been addressed to John Home, author of Douglas, and in it, Collins exhorted Home and poets in general to use the remains of antiquity, legends, and Celtic

Society of Edinburgh

- (a) See Transactions of the Royal ~~Scottish Academy~~, Vol. I., and Carlyle's Autobiography, p. 590
- (b) Collins had still another point of likeness with Gray in that so far as the subject of early literature was concerned, he was a scholar as well as a poet. Thomas Warton tells us that Collins "intended to write the History of the Restoration of Learning under Leo the Tenth, and with a view to that design had collected many scarce books". (History of English Poetry, II. 361n). Warton had the benefit of what work Collins did.

poetry, still lingering in the Highlands. When Carlyle found the manuscript among the papers of a friend of Home, he showed the poem to Home, who remembered that Collins had composed it hastily and had intended to revise it at leisure, but that leisure apparently never came. Carlyle, not appreciating the value of his find, allowed the poem to be forgotten again, until he read Dr. Johnson's Life of Collins, where it was told how the Wartons, consistently enough, considered the Ode the best of Collins' work. According to Johnson, the poem was lost. Carlyle then recovered the manuscript from among his papers and, after getting Henry Mackenzie to fill in the gaps, read it to the Literary Class of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 1784. It had to wait four more years before it was published, and first appeared in the Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, with Carlyle's explanations. It was reprinted the same year in the Edinburgh Magazine, Scots Magazine, European Magazine, and Annual Register. The fact that forty years elapsed between the writing and the publishing of the Ode, although it does not detract from the intrinsic value, does rob it of much of its value to us and leaves nothing but the fact that such a poem was written at such a time. Probably there would have been little more to say even if the poem had been published when

it was written. It was far too early for such ideas to make any permanent impress, as the fact of its being forgotten for forty years shows. The eighteenth century audience was not yet ready for such themes. It might welcome the dramatization of the ballad Gil Morice but it could not allow itself any genuine and unashamed interest in tales of chivalry of unadapted legends of the Highlands. But the mood of the age was being imperceptibly modified; indifference was giving place to scornful hostility or, rarely, enthusiasm. Where the work of Ramsay and Collins was premature and without echo, that of Percy and Gray was timely, reverberating throughout the century.

New sources of inspiration, to be fully admitted into the body of literature, must go through three processes, any one of which, being missed, can nullify the effect of the other two. The sources must be made widely available; they must be used in contemporary creative literature; and they must exert an influence on contemporary criticism. By 1766 each process was well started, the octopus-like grasp of literature had seized the new food, and the long slow process of digestion had begun. We have seen the publication of early literature well on its road by 1765, and we have seen its early effect on creative poetry. Criticism also was not slow to

take notice; Hurd's Letters on Chivalry and Romance which appeared in 1762, three years before the Reliques, is, with Warton's Observations on the Faerie Queen, among the earliest and most important evidences of the seeping of the new spirit into contemporary letters.

Richard Hurd, for 33 years a Bishop, was a correspondent of Gray, Mason, Warburton, and other literary men of the time, although it would be hard to find a good word spoken for him by any of his friends. In 1759 Hurd published Moral and Political Dialogues, the third and fourth of which deal with the age of Queen Elizabeth. In these Dialogues Robert Digby, Dr. Arbuthnot, and Addison discuss the Elizabethan period and its customs, with Arbuthnot, who defends the age against Addison's smug condemnation, clearly getting the better of the discussion. The substance of Dr. Arbuthnot's reflections, which are clearly those of the author, may be summed up in his own words, when he says at the very end of the Dialogues:

"I only conclude that the taste of the age, the state of letters, and the genius of the English tongue, was such as gave a manliness to their compositions of all sorts, and even an elegance to those of the lighter forms, which we might do well to emulate, and not deride, in this era of politeness ... the times of Elizabeth may pass for golden, notwithstanding what a fondness for this age of baser metal may incline us to represent it".

The Letters on Chivalry and Romance, published three years later, were written as an elaboration of the

Elizabethan part of the Dialogues. In the first Letter Hurd merely proposed his subject. He will attempt to account for the origin of chivalry, and for the spirit of romance which came from chivalry. He suggested:

"... may there not be something in the Gothic Romance peculiarly suited to the views of a genius, and to the ends of poetry? And may not the philosophic moderns have gone too far, in their perpetual ridicule and contempt for it?" The next four Letters contained a discussion of medieval manners and customs, remarkable for little save the subject. This part of Hurd's work was derived mostly from St. Palaye's Memoire sur L'Ancienne Chevalrie consideree comme un etablissement politique & militaire,⁽¹⁾ Other material Hurd got himself from "old Romances". "Not", he remarked deprecatingly, "that I shall make a merit with you in having perused these barbarous volumes myself; much less would I impose the ungrateful task upon you". Taking his material from St. Palaye, he erected a similar parallel in manners, superstitions, and customs between the Gothic and the Heroic age, and in Letter V carried the

⁽¹⁾ In Memoires de litterature, tires des registres de l'Academie Royal des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres. Tom.XX. Paris, 1753. pp. 595-847.

In these five papers St. Palaye gave an enthusiastic account of the customs and chivalry of the late medieval times, bringing out the parallel of those times with the times of Homer, to the advantage of the medieval. The account was widely used by antiquarians in England throughout the century. It was first translated into English in 1784 by Mrs. Susannah Dobson, who added a short and valueless preface.

parallel still further, endeavouring to show that the Hero and the Knight were practically identical, and that "Jerusalem was to the European what Troy had been to the Grecian heroes".

Beginning with Letter VI Hurd launched into the literary criticism that makes the Letters important. He opened by asserting that Gothic manners as shown in Tasso's Gierusalemme liberata, where they differ from the manners pictured in the Iliad, were clearly superior, and that, could Homer have chosen, he would certainly have preferred to live in feudal times because of the "improved gallantry of the feudal times; and the superior solemnity of their superstitions". He regretted that a great poet like Homer did not live among the Gothic knights. Spenser and Tasso came too late. "The mummeries of the pagan priests were childish, but the Gothic enchanters shook and alarmed all nature".

"We feel this difference very sensibly in reading the antient and modern poets. You would not compare the Canidia of Horace with the witches in Macbeth. And what are Virgil's myrtles dropping blood, to Tasso's enchanted forests?"

So Hurd continued, pointing out that Shakespeare and Milton both relied on Gothic imagery for their best effects in the "terrible sublime". "In a word, you will find that the manners they paint, and the superstitions they adopt, are the more poetical for being Gothic."

In Letter VII he explained the difference between the two systems by applying their principles

to "the two greatest of our poets ...Spenser and Milton". Spenser chose a Gothic subject, and it is as a Gothic, not as a classical poem, that the Faerie Queen should be read and criticized. It was only after long hesitation that Milton gave up the Gothic subject of Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table for the more classical theme of Paradise Lost. Shakespeare is "even greater when he uses Gothic manners and machinery, than when he employs classical"—heresy indeed, at a time when Shakespeare's ignorance or deliberate flouting of classical manners and machinery was still deprecated by his editors and strong admirers.

Early in the next Letter Hurd included one of his most significant paragraphs:

"When an architect examines a Gothic structure by Grecian rules, he finds nothing but deformity. But the Gothic architecture has its own rules, by which when it comes to be examined, it is seen to have its merit, as well as the Grecian. The question is not, which of the two is conducted in the simplest and truest taste; but whether there be not sense and design in both, when scrutinized by the laws on which each is projected."

With this principle constantly before him he devoted the rest of the Letter to an analysis of the Faerie Queen, and tried to show that what weakness the unity of the poem has was the result of Spenser's knowledge of the classical rules, which caused him to confuse the

two types of composition. The unity of Spenser's Gothic masterpiece was essentially one of design, rather than of action. Here, in what is Hurd's principal contribution to criticism, it is more than likely that he was writing in direct refutation of some of the views expressed in Thomas Warton's Observations on the Faerie Queen. The thought is attractively ironical, although that is by no means its only claim to probability. To anyone enlightened as to the vagaries of criticism it will seem by no means inconsistent that one of the chief tenets of Romantic criticism should originate from a contradiction of what is considered a great pioneer work of early Romanticism.

Like most early Romanticists, Warton was, particularly in his early criticism, fully half a classicist, though it must be remembered that it is we, not they, who lay down the rules for consistency which they must follow. Although it is evident that several times in the Observations Warton was on the verge of expressing the same opinion which Hurd advanced so forcefully in the quoted paragraph, he nevertheless condemned Spenser because of his neglect of classical rules of construction. In the Postscript of the second edition of the Observations, published the same year as Hurd's Letters, Warton stated his attitude in his own words. He said, summing up his attitude, that he had criticized Spenser because "by epic rules" the poet was too

little "studious of design and uniformity". Speaking of the Italian poets, he said: "I have blamed, indeed, the vicious excess of their fictions; yet I have found no fault in general, with their use of magical machinery; notwithstanding I have so far conformed to the reigning maxims of modern criticism, as, in the meantime, to recommend classical propriety"⁶⁾. Although this passage was not in the first edition, published in 1754, the spirit of the criticism is plain throughout the whole work, and none of it was modified in any direction for the second edition. Despite the if-and-but atmosphere of the passage Warton's attitude was clear, and it was against this attitude in general, if not against Warton in particular, that Hurd wrote the passage quoted above. Certainly Hurd was ignoring, probably directly assailing Warton, when he said: "It is certain that much light might be thrown on that singular work, were an able critic to consider it in this view [as a Gothic rather than a classical poem]. For instance, he might go some way towards explaining, perhaps justifying, the general plan and conduct of the Faerie Queen, which, to classical readers, has appeared indefensible". It was exactly the plan and conduct of the poem that Warton had frowned upon in the first section of his Observations. In the

© Observations ... 2nd ed. II.269

same Letter Hurd condemned Spenser for trying to infuse, as an afterthought, a spurious classical unity upon the Gothic pattern of his poem, by introducing Prince Arthur in each of the several books. This was the very point, as Hurd remarked, which Warton had praised as a saving feature in the otherwise poor construction of the Faerie Queen.

Hurd continued in Letter IX his championing of Medievalism. The point he principally insisted on was the "...preeminence of the Gothic manners and fictions, as adapted to the ends of poetry, above the classic". He then turned his guns on French criticism, particularly that of Boileau, for the treatment accorded Ariosto and Tasso; and on the English critics, Davenant, Rymer, "and the rest of that school", including Lord Shaftesbury, for slavishly following the French lead.

The same vein of vigorous and clarifying criticism continued in the next Letter:

"But the source of bad criticism, as universally of bad philosophy, is the abuse of terms. A poet, they say, must follow Nature; and by Nature we are to suppose can only be meant the known and experienced course of affairs in this world. Whereas the poet has a world of his own, where experience has less to do, than consistent imagination".

He went on to show that the term Nature was meaningless if not limited. He always returned to his favourite point:

"But I stick to my point and maintain that the faery tales of Tasso do him more honour than what are called more natural, that is, the classical parts of his poem". Even so, he would advise "no modern poet to revive these faery tales in an epic poem," because "writers do not succeed so well in painting what they have heard, as what they believe themselves, or at least observe in others a facility of believing".

In the last two Letters Hurd condemned the modern taste that rejected Gothic and chivalric poetry. He concluded:

"What we have gotten by this revolution, you will say, is a great deal of good sense. What we have lost, is a world of fine fabling; the illusion of which was so grateful to the Charmed Spirit; that, in spite of philosophy and fashion, Faery Spenser still ranks highest among the poets; I mean with all those who are either come of that house, or have any kindness for it".

Here was revolutionary doctrine indeed. The early Letters, second-hand as they were, gave the reader nothing new or striking. For the rest of the collection Hurd ceased to lean and speculate on other men's ideas, and, although many of his points had been more or less faintly adumbrated by earlier critics, it is forever to his credit that he laid them down at that particular time. As is evident from his correspondence with Warburton, Hurd wrote the Letters piecemeal, and consequently did not always see where his

his enthusiasm was to lead him. In his fourth essay, as we have seen, he referred to the "old Romances" as "barbarous volumes" which he would never recommend to the reader. At the end of his Letters he defended these same Romances vigourously, and says that in Sir Thopas Chaucer was satirizing "their impertinences only", and that by beginning the Squire's Tale so brilliantly Chaucer showed his appreciation of the best of them. Incidentally, Hurd was the first man to point out that in Sir Thopas Chaucer was not writing a serious Romance, but was burlesquing the species. Up to this time Sir Thopas had been taken in all seriousness. Thomas Gray, writing somewhere about 1760, did not realize the truth, as is evident from the way he mentioned the poem.⁽¹⁾ Hurd's discussion here was cited by Warton, both in the second edition of his Observations⁽²⁾ and in his History,⁽³⁾ and also by Tyrwhitt.⁽⁴⁾

Towards the end of the volume Hurd was writing as a man expressing feelings long pent up. He became more and more enthusiastic, and his style, never lucid, changed for greater vigour and clarity. What he had to say was the result of deep conviction, unlike the more conventional and insipid criticisms of his other works. Frequently his opinions

(1) Gray: Works. ed. Gosse. London, 1884. I.338

(2) I.139n-142n

(3) History, 1774. I.433-34

(4) Canterbury Tales, 1775. Notes on lines 13692 and 13739

here clash embarrassingly with those expressed in his other works, but there is little doubt as to which were the sincere and final views. In his commentary on Horace he said that "the ancients are our masters in the art of composition", and that Pope was the "English Horace". In his essay On the Marks of Imitation he spoke disparagingly of Milton's reference to a rose without thorns, "and though it was fine to imagine such a one in Paradise, it could only be an Italian refinement". Both these extracts were characteristic of Hurd, the conventional, toadying eighteenth century divine. But in his own commonplace book, probably kept from the eye of "the friend and commentator of Mr. Pope", he wrote:

"The greater, and what may be called pure, poetry came to perfection in the hands of Spenser and Milton ... The humbler sorts of poetry, under whatever name, but chiefly satiric and ehhic, have been carried to all the excellence their nature permits, and advanced with the utmost grace and harmony of versification and expression, by Dryden and Pope".⁽¹⁾

Another entry:

"There is a graceful negligence of expression and temerity of conception in some parts of Shakespeare, and all over Lucretius, that have a better effect in poetry than the studied exactness and cautious sublimity of Virgil and Pope. They give a freshness and novelty, or what is called originality, which no critical accuracy can supply. It is an effect which no polish of language ... can produce."⁽²⁾

⁽¹⁾ Kilvert: Life of Bishop Hurd. p. 289
⁽²⁾ ibid. p. 287

Like Percy, Hurd was a little afraid of his own bravery, and was chary of risking his reputation on what posterity had found to be his only claim to fame. About a month after the publication of the Letters he wrote to ~~to~~ Dr. Balguy in almost the same words Percy ~~was~~ to choose in the ~~same~~ circumstances: "...the trifle I sent you ... make any objections you please ... I can hardly think the demand will continue for so mere an amusement"⁽¹⁾. He could hardly have sincerely felt that to deny the validity of the dominating literary criticism of his age was merely "an amusement".

The Letters were, of course, praised by Warburton, whose satellite Hurd was, and by Balguy and Yorke, fellow toadies with Hurd. The Reviews, not understanding with what fire they were playing, were unanimously friendly. The notices in the Gentleman's Magazine and the Critical Review consisted mostly of summary. Only the Monthly Review, in a seventeen page opening article seemed to realize that here was something new. The reviewer found that instead of "cautiously creeping in the track" of his predecessors, not "daring to think for themselves, the author of these Letters opens a new vein in criticism". Despite what the orthodox critics of poetry will say, these Letters will meet "favourable reception from every reader of taste".

⁽¹⁾ Kilvert: Life of Bishop Hurd. p.88

Not only was the importance of the Letters recognized immediately after their publication, but they continued to exert an influence for many years, as long as such pioneer work was necessary. They must have been in constant demand at booksellers, for they were reprinted a few months after they were first published, and appeared with the Moral and Political Dialogues in 1765, 1771, 1776, and 1778.

It is strange, however, that in the correspondence of Thomas Gray there is no mention of Hurd's Letters. Gray's only mention of Hurd in connection with their common interest in older literature is in a letter to Mason, close friend of both; he wrote, March 17, 1762: "I hear Mr. Hurd is seriously writing against Fingal, by the instigation of the devil and the Bishop. Can it be true?" As a matter of fact, neither the devil nor Warburton was to blame. Hurd was immediately convinced that both Ossian and Fingal were both forgeries, and it was he who convinced the Bishop, who had accepted both as genuine. Even Horace Walpole, as well informed as anyone on the literary movements of his time, entirely ignored the Letters, and wrote of Hurd to Mason as late as March 3, 1781: "All his writings are tame, without a grain of originality". Opinions like these, however, show how

thoroughly disliked was Hurd personally, rather than how great an influence his work had.

As Professor Saintsbury pointed out,⁶ the publication of the Letters was most timely. Percy's Reliques was only three years away. In spite of the fact that the orthodox critics of literature were still set against the "barbarous" ballads and all early literature which savoured of the Gothic, this literature was beginning to be recalled and to receive critical attention. At this point an eminently respectable critic, later a Bishop, spoke out vigourously and boldly to say that the much despised Gothic poetry of the earlier writers was, judged by the proper standards, superior to the literature of Greece and Rome. The first major work of categorically Romantic criticism in England was coming as a defense of older literature. It did not become an epoch making, or even a famous book, but it is prominent among the first works to provide a solid basis of able criticism upon which the new editions of the scorned literature could safely rest. Most of the critical writing on early literature at this time and for a half century to come was mainly concerned, perforce, with giving information, or with apologising for its existence. Richard Hurd, through specific discussion of early literature, made valuable additions to

⁶Saintsbury: History of English Criticism. Edin. 1911. p.271

the permanent body of criticism.

Percy, ever on the scent, did not miss the implications of the new book. By June 5th he wrote to Farmer that he had already read it twice "with great pleasure"⁽¹⁾, though his report to Shenstone was not quite so kindly: "Have you ^{seen} Hurd's new letters on Chivalry? he is clever, but he is a Coxcomb and affects too much to be called a fine writer..."⁽²⁾ Whatever his opinions of Hurd, Percy sensed the value of the Letters as a forerunner to the revival of the Romances themselves: "The favourable Light in which Mr. Hurd and he [Warton] set the old Romances, I think will be an excellent preparative for such a collection as the old ones in metre as I think sometime to publish..."⁽³⁾ The following year, still hopeful of a change in public taste that would insure the success of the Reliques, Percy wrote to Hailes: "Mr. Hurd's Letters on Chivalry (which you must have seen) may perhaps dispose the public to give a favourable reception to a few of the best of these ancient Romances; wherein they will frequently see the rich ore of a Tasso or Ariosto, tho' buried, as might be expected, among mineral substances of less value"⁽⁴⁾. This hope of Percy's sums up the procedure of the whole revival. Each new work brought forward, each new dissertation, leaned on the preceding works and gained courage from their success.

- ⁽¹⁾ Percy to Farmer, Jun. 5, 1762. Brit. Mus. Mss. 28222, f.6
- ⁽²⁾ Percy to Shenstone, Jun. 17, 1762. Brit. Mus. Mss. 28221, f.97v.
- ⁽³⁾ Percy to Farmer, Sep. 9, 1762. Brit. Mus. Mss. 28222, f.8.
- ⁽⁴⁾ Percy to Hailes, Sep. 8, 1763. " " " 32331, f.37v

IV

The Movement in Scotland

The literary antiquarian movement in Scotland was simultaneous with that in England, each country furnishing stimulus and aid to the other. Despite the close cooperation between individual antiquaries in the two countries, there was no relationship between them as groups. The difference in national temper gave a different colour to the work done on either side of the Tweed. In England the revival was in the hands of men who were interested in the movement solely because of the antiquity or intrinsic value of the recovered literature. Their work was the work of scholarship, performed with the same emotion with which they would have unearthed Egyptian remains. In Scotland the editing and publishing of ancient Scottish literature was a sacred duty; the scholarly enthusiasm of England became a fervent patriotism when it crossed the border, and with this emotional impulse the revival gained added life and zest. It was only a little more than a half century that Scotland had been united with England. Her commercial prosperity was growing, and Edinburgh was becoming the most brilliant intellectual city in Europe.

Scotsmen were thoroughly aware of this new cultural and economic life, but the more thoughtful saw another side to the picture. Scotland, in union with England, and with ever increasing material wealth, was in danger of being swallowed up by her populous southern partner. It was they who furnished the patriotic enthusiasm for the movement. After the Union in 1707 political nationalism was definitely gone, but romantic nationalism was intensified. It was the patriotic impulse, the desire to keep the distinctively Scottish culture that had preserved the old Scottish songs, and such poets as Douglas, Lyndsay, and Blind Harry, in the sporadically reprinted selections appearing early in the eighteenth century. Were Scotsmen not so conscious of the lengthening shadow of England in their lives, they would hardly have been such passionate upholders of the authenticity of Ossian and Fingal. As the two cultures merged, with the great weight of the English ever predominating, Scotsmen rallied to the defense of their priceless heritage of old poetry. Dr. Johnson's remark that "a Scotchman must be a very sturdy moralist who does not love Scotland more than truth"⁽¹⁾ was suggested by the ~~the~~ Scots' patriotic but uncritical pride in resurrected Scottish poetry.

At another time Johnson exclaimed:⁽²⁾ "All of them, - nay not all, - but droves of them would come up, and attest

⁽¹⁾ Boswell's Life of Johnson: ed. G.B.Hill. 11.311n

⁽²⁾ *ibid.* 11.311

anything for the honour of Scotland". The difference in point of view between the antiquarians of the two countries is nowhere better shown than in their attitude to the literature they were rescuing. The English antiquarian had little personal affection for the poetry he laboured to revive; his prefaces always apologized for publishing such poor stuff; he always intimated that his antiquarianism was merely a hobby for rainy days in the country. It was very rarely that belief in the intrinsic value of the work was given as a reason for republishing it. Usually, if we are to believe the editors, it was as a result of that admirable and very popular eighteenth century virtue, "curiosity". There was an abundance of fire and thunder in English antiquarian circles, but there was never any heat spent on the actual literature. All the quarrels - and there were many - were concerned with methods of editing or with minute details of fact. Despite the fact that Joseph Ritson's heart and soul were bound up in the movement, nowhere in his correspondence or in his prefaces did he betray the slightest enthusiasm for early literature as literature. There is little doubt that Percy himself had a genuine affection for his old ballads, but all his life he strove to hide it, as unbecoming in an eighteenth century clergyman. In the English antiquary there was no feeling that early English literature was a part of the heritage of eighteenth century England: it was rather

looked upon as being the work of another race, in a foreign country. Above all, there was lacking the feeling of pride in the literary achievements of the race as a race.

The Scottish antiquarian, in contrast, had a definite bond with the literature of his native country. For him, the editing of early Scottish texts was a labour of love and duty, as well as of scholarly research. The Scot felt a definite pride in his country's early poetry; these old poets were his people, and they had written about the history of his country. Except in one or two cases the apologetic note was missing from the prefaces of Scottish antiquarian works. Often the appeal to national feeling was made the justification of the work, but frequently the literary value of the revived poetry was considered reason enough for republication.

The English attitude was plainly shown in reviews of Scottish, Irish, or Welsh antiquarian works. Towards publications of the early literature of his own country the average English reviewer was contemptuous; towards those of other countries he was supercilious. In a review of Miss Brooke's Reliques of Irish Poetry the Monthly Review said: "The ancient poetry of our neighbors, the Irish, the Scots, and the Welsh, is held

by the patriotic inhabitants of those countries in increasing reverence; not only as consisting of literary curiosities, but as genuine history, and precious relics of the pristine worth and independence of their ancestors". The reviewer was slightly contemptuous of this increasing reverence, intimating that it was confined to the Irish, Scots, and Welsh, and that enthusiasm for early literature was due to a too strong patriotism, which the decorous Englishman would do well to avoid.

Two men connected with the revival of early Scottish literature illustrate the good and bad features of the emotional temper of the movement. Archibald Constable, the publisher of many works on the early history and literature of Scotland, was far from being a cold business man when his patriotism was touched. Without his enthusiasm and practical interest many of the works published in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries would never have been attempted. Most of his publications fall outside the date of this study, but the effect of his influence will be seen on Dalryell and Leyden. The idea for many of the antiquarian books he published came from Constable himself, rather than from the editors, as his correspondence shows.

On the other side of the picture was the Earl of Buchan. Only the eighteenth century could have produced such a figure; only that century would have tolerated such

pretensions with such complete lack of any ability. So complete a picture was he, and so rarely did he fall from the heights of his stupidity where he towered above his fellow men, that he seems a savage caricature rather than a human being. The Earl of Buchan was interested in literature, particularly in the antiquarian movement ~~movement~~ in literature, much to the woe of Scottish antiquaries. He was an Earl, so nothing could be done about him, but many dark mutterings went on behind his back. His complete lack of true dignity and pride made him the laughing stock of his countrymen, while they had to submit to his patronage. His thick skin fortunately enabled his victims to relieve their minds with impunity. It must be said that his love for Scottish literature was sincere, but his conceit was much stronger, and the two together provoked some ridiculous situations, as when he caused a monument to be erected to the poet Thomson, with his own name, as sponsor of the monument, engraved in as large letters as the poet's name. He had created for himself the role of patron of Scottish art and letters and kept up a voluminous correspondence with as many men of letters as he could, pompously and patronisingly giving unasked advice, for which he expected fulsome acknowledgement. He was completely without literary taste, and with his very flimsy knowledge of antiquarian subjects he often dictated to men who were authorities on

the subject. The one bad-tempered remark in David Herd's correspondence is directed against Buchan's officious ignorance. Thomas Park, the London scholar, after several breaks, finally ceased to correspond with him. Park's letters to Robert Anderson contain pages of scornful abuse of Buchan. Buchan's own letters, even more than the comments of his contemporaries, reveal the insufferable coxcomb. A contemporary anonymous poem describes him:

"How well he 's written, and how much has read,
 How hungry authors swallowed all he said,
 And antiquarians banished him their board,
 Aw'd by the wit of such a sapient Lord.
 When (Pride and Av'rice struggling hard for sway)
 He rears the cast, for which he will not pay.

 Now hear him give the band their rich reward,
 A fulsome portrait painted by the yard!
 "Take it", he cries, "and hang it in your hall,"
 "All sons of science for my sanction call;"
 "Short though I be, Colossus-like I stand,"
 "Wave o'er each hemisphere my critic wand;"
 "There future ages shall with rapture see,"
 "Imperial Alex, and important ME."¶

One longs for what certainly would have been a crisp pulverising sentence from Dr. Johnson on the subject of the puff-pudding mind of the Earl of Buchan.

Fortunately for Scottish antiquarianism, the Earl of Buchan's association with the movement was mostly in connection with the work of other men. His interest could thus do little harm, and the prestige of his rank did some

good. It is illustrative of the difference in the antiquarian movement in the two countries, that England could produce no publisher or man of rank to take the place of Constable and Buchan. Because of the emotional appeal there was proportionally a much larger and more receptive audience for early Scottish literature than for English, and the amount of work done in Scotland was ^{correspondingly} ~~xxxxxx~~ larger. From Lord Hailes to Scott, the Scottish movement was more popular, more stable, and more assured of permanent success than was the corresponding movement in England.

Lord Hailes (Sir David Dalrymple) of Edinburgh, whom we have already met as Percy's helper with the Scottish ballads contained in the Reliques, was in his own right an able and influential leader in the movement to revive early literature. Coming from noble ancestry, with a distinguished legal and literary career, he was one of those rare paradoxical beings, -a dignified but ardent antiquary. He stood apart from the whirlpool of personal bickering into which most of the eighteenth century antiquaries found themselves drawn, will-nilly, even remaining on amicable terms with that egregious wind-bag, the Earl of Buchan, without kow-towing. His

judicial career did not interfere with his literary work as the long list of his books, mostly on the history of the British Isles, shows, and his most famous work, Annals of Scotland, has since become a source book for scholars.

It appears that Hailes' first work as a literary antiquary was the editing of a little group of Scottish ballads issued anonymously by the Foulis press. A version of Edom of Gordon^(a) was published in Glasgow in 1755, and in the same year were issued Gil Morrice and Young Waters. In 1747 the same press published the ballad of Chevy-Chace, and in 1748 Allan Ramsay's version of Hardyknute. It is impossible to say for how much of this work Lord Hailes was editorially responsible.^(a) In any case the little booklets were not important, for the editing was by no means in accord with Hailes' later

(a) Edom of Gordon; An Ancient Scottish Poem. Never Before Printed. Glasgow, 1755.

(a) The British Museum catalogue gives the editor of Edom of Gordon as Hailes. Percy, in a letter to Hailes, seems sure that Hailes had edited Edom of Gordon and takes it for granted that he was also the editor of the others, though there is no indication of the source of his information: "Be pleased, sir, to inform me whence you had Edom of Gordon, Gil Morris, (for I presume you were also the editor of this) and any of the other charming ballads printed by Mr. Foulis. You will pardon me if I suspect that they rec'd some beauties in passing thro' your hands". (Brit. Mus. Add. Mss. 32331, f.14). Unfortunately most of Hailes's letters to Percy are lost and we do not know whether Hailes himself had told Percy that he was the editor or whether he later confirmed or denied Percy's assumption. There is no further reference to the ballads in Percy's letters to Hailes.

editorial ideals, as Percy Slyly hints. The texts differ from current versions, and certainly show the fine hand of some furbisher, whether Hailes or some other editor, except the reprint of Hardyknute from the Evergreen.

Lord Hailes' next publication of early literature was hardly more important, from the editorial standpoint. In 1765, the year of the Reliques, he published anonymously A Specimen of a Book intituled Ane Compendious Booke of Godly and Spiritual Songs ...⁽¹⁾ The first edition of the original of this work was lost,⁽²⁾ but another edition, of unknown date, was in the library of George Paton.⁽³⁾ From this copy, since shown to be a 1621 edition, Lord Hailes made his selections, and published them in a small volume of less than 50 pages, without benefit of any editorial ministrations, except a brief glossary. The poems from which Hailes made a selection have an interesting history. In the early days of the Reformation, when the reformers were persecuted by the Church, these songs were one of the means of propaganda of

⁽¹⁾ A Specimen of a Book intituled Ane Compendious Booke of Godly and Spiritual Sangs, collectit out of Sundrie Partes of the Scripture, with Sundrie other Ballates changed out of Prophaine Sanges, for avoyding of Sinne and Harlotrie. With Augmentation of sundrie Gude and Godly Ballates, not contained in the first edition. Edinburgh, Printed by Andro Hart. Edinburgh, 1765.

⁽²⁾ Earlier editions than the one Hailes used have since been recovered, In 1868 David Laing republished the work from a 1578 edition, and in 1897 A.F. Mitchell edited the Songs for the Scottish Text Society from a 1567 edition.

⁽³⁾ Dalryell: Scottish Poems of the Sixteenth Century, p.vi

the new faith. Poetry is easily retained in the mind, and though the secretly printed sheets might be destroyed, the songs could continue to affect religious thought. Their authorship is now attributed mainly to the Wedderburn⁶ brothers. The songs themselves comprise metrical versions of the psalms, several bits of the scripture, metrical versions of the ten commandments, the Lord's prayer, and miscellaneous songs didactic and satiric of the Roman faith.

Hailes' selection characteristically omitted such songs as might seem coarse, such as the songs referring to the private lives of the celibate Roman clergy. Without introduction or explanatory notes, the book gained little attention. It was received as it was probably intended to be - as an hors d'oeuvre for the few readers who might share the editor's taste. Beyond this small audience it was unnoticed.

Lord Hailes' importance to us rests on the publication of Ancient Scottish Poems, Published from the MS. of George Bannatyne MDLXVIII, Edinburgh, 1770. The Bannatyne MS. was transcribed in 1568 by George Bannatyne, a merchant in Edinburgh, during a great plague, when in the space of three months he occupied his leisure by compiling from "copies awld, markit and vitallit" what we now know as the Bannatyne MS. It has been the chief means of preserving for

⁶ Scottish Text Society edition: p. xix-xxvi.

for posterity the work of the old Scots "makaris". The MS. consists of upwards of 800 closely written_x folio pages, containing 334 pieces, or 376 if duplicate and other poems written at the end are included. About forty of the early Scots poets are named; the rest, a large proportion of the work, are anonymous. In 1712 the MS. was presented to the Hon. William Carmicheal by a descendant of George Foulis of Woodhall and Ravilstone, the son-in-law of Bannatyne. While Carmicheal had it, he loaned it to Allan Ramsay, who selected from it the bulk of the Evergreen. In 1772 it was presented to the Advocates' Library, since when it has been used again and again as the basis of anthologies, and of editions of individual poets.

From the care that was obviously bestowed on it critics have come to the conclusion that Bannatyne was not, as he said, merely occupying leisure moments, but was actuated by an honest desire to preserve as much as he could of the older Scottish literature that he thought worth saving. His labour has saved much that would otherwise be irrecoverable, including many of the poems of Dunbar and Henryson. The MS. was printed in four volumes for the Hunterian Club (Glasgow) in 1896. A detailed analysis of its contents by David Laing appeared in the volume called Memorials of George Bannatyne, (Edinburgh, 1829) and another by Pinkerton in the appendix to the second volume of Ancient

Scottish Poems.

It was, as we have just mentioned, ~~this~~ MS. on which Allan Ramsay based his Evergreen. In his preface Hailes explained his reason for publication:

"The many and obvious inaccuracies of the Evergreen suggested the idea of this new collection ... In it the MS. has been fairly copied; no liberties in amending or interpolating have been taken. The reader will find the language, versification, and spelling, in the same state as they were in 1568 ... The editor of this collection has excluded the indecent and omitted the unintelligible poems. He has added about forty poems which were never before published; and, in general has studied to make such a selection as might illustrate the manners and history, as well as ~~of~~ the state of the language and poetry of Scotland during the sixteenth century."⁽¹⁾

Then, after scoring Ramsay for adulterating the text of the original he attacked the accuracy of the former editor's glossary. Ramsay, said Hailes, "was not skillful in the ancient Scottish dialect", and by way of proof he cited numerous examples of his ignorance or laxness.

Hailes appended an enlarged Glossary, ^{for} ~~with~~ which he acknowledged help, and listed words and phrases that were unknown to him and the other scholars. His helpful and accurate notes to the poems themselves were largely taken over by Warton and used in the History of Poetry.⁽²⁾

After Ramsay's unreliable collection, Ancient Scottish Poems was the first publication of the old

① Op.Cit. p.vii

② Pinkerton's Letters: 1.33

Scottish Chaucerians as well as ^{of} some later Scottish poets. Hailes omitted some poems Ramsay had included, but added many more. The collection is rich in Dunbar's poems, containing no fewer than thirty-two, but Henryson, whom Hailes, together with most eighteenth century critics, regarded as greatly inferior to Dunbar, is represented by ten pieces in all, including two of the fables, and four of the morals without the fables, for "they are not so tedious" - a curious literary judgment. One poem of Lyndsay's, Ane Description of Pedder Coffeys is given, but is not assigned to him. Six of Alexander Scott's poems were included, and one of Kennedy's satires on Dunbar.

Lord Hailes' editorial standards were certainly an improvement over those of his friend Percy, but they were far from fulfilling the promise of the preface, which led the reader to believe that the sole reason for his publication was to correct the errors of Ramsay and give him the unadulterated text of the Bannatyne MS. "In it", ^{Hailes} ~~he~~ said, "the MS. has been fairly copied; no liberties in amending or interpolating have been taken". The first poem he printed, Dunbar's The Thistle and the Rose, contains his most glaring lapse. Ramsay had changed the first line of the poem from "Quhen Merche wes, with variand windis past" to "Quhen M~~a~~rche with variand winds was overpast". "This may be a better line", wrote Hailes in his notes,

"than what Dunbar could make; but it is the business of the publisher to set forth other men's works, not his own." Certainly a succinct and commendable statement of his editorial policy. It is all the more amazing, then, that Hailes changed the concluding couplet of the poem from the MS. version:

"And thus I writ as yi haif hard to sorrow,
Of lusty May upone the nynt morrow."

to Allan Ramsay's version:

"Callt to my Muse, and for my subject chois
To sing the Ryel Thrissill and the Rose"

He acknowledged the change with the explanation: "The conclusion of the stanza is taken from Allan Ramsay, who caught the spirit of Dunbar, which Dunbar seems to have let escape by his bald and prosaic conclusion". Why in this instance Hailes should unashamedly follow Ramsay rather than the original, when on the previous page he had spoken so vigourously about the strict duty of the publisher, is puzzling. In the notes to the other poems he acknowledged no such deliberate changes, and there appear to be none. Hailes' explanation that Ramsay's version was better might tend to excuse almost anyone but the writer of the previous notes to the poem. Later editors of Dunbar have not followed Ramsay and Hailes, but have restored the original couplet.

Unlike Percy, Hailes did not try to palm off a modern addition as ancient, but further praise as an

editor it is difficult to give him. A comparison of Hailes' text with the text of the Bannatyne MS. printed by the Scottish Text Society reveals that his professed ~~high~~ standard of accuracy was unfortunately not upheld. But his shortcomings are on a wholly different plane from the sins of Percy, both in extent and in motive. I found that Hailes' version is accurate so long as the MS. is clearly legible, but where the original is difficult to read, Hailes' version often differs from the reading which scholars have subsequently established. He was too ready to substitute a conjectural reading when the way became hard, but there was no intention of improving, or in any other way deliberately altering the text.

A letter from Percy to Hailes reveals that the probable source of most of these errors was not Hailes' own laxness, but the incompetence of an amanuensis who transcribed the MS. for him. "Upon looking into Banatyne's MS. w'ch I have just rec'd I regret that I was not present when your Amanuensis transcribed your copies for the Press, as I see many oversights in consequence of his not being sufficiently conversant in the old hand-writing."⁶ It is barely possible that Percy shifted the onus from Hailes to a mythical amanuensis, so as to be able to point out to Hailes the inaccuracy of the transcription without any

⁶ Percy to Hailes. June 3, 1773. Brit. Mus. Add. Mss. 32331. f.98.

discomfort, for Percy's ways were often devious. But this is unlikely. Percy was too closely in touch with Hailes at this time, too conversant with his plans, to be able to feign ignorance on such a topic. Hailes' preface made no mention of his dependence upon this unknown transcriber upon whose authority alone he could say "the reader will find the language, versification, and spelling, in the same state they were in 1568". But that is not remarkable, for the correspondence of eighteenth century antiquarians shows that, although they were usually capable, they rarely transcribed manuscripts personally. They cannot be blamed when we consider that manuscripts were often difficult of access, particularly those not belonging to the larger libraries, and that for many editors, antiquarian pursuits were a side line in a busy life.

The reception which the reviewers accorded Ancient Scottish Poems is indicative of the faint and not very intelligent interest which the periodical critics had in the works of the older poets when they were not refurbished in Percy's manner. The Scots Magazine⁽¹⁾ mentioned the book non-committally and gave about a half column of extracts from the preface, with no critical comment. The Gentleman's Magazine did not even mention it. The writer of the notice in the Critical Review⁽²⁾ shows the scornful attitude

⁽¹⁾ Scots Magazine: May, 1770

⁽²⁾ Critical Review: December, 1770

that editors of the Scottish poets in particular would have to break down:

"The Reviewers return their sincerest thanks to the editor of these poems for having procured them a holiday. As it is his boast that he has preserved their language, versification, and spelling, in the same state as they were in the year 1568, they are as safe as if they were obscured by Arabic or Welch, from the censure of critics who will never presume to deliver their opinions concerning performances exhibited in languages which they do not understand, and are too old, or too much better employed, to learn. In a word, this collection is only calculated for the meridian of Aberdeen."

The Monthly Review was not so antagonistic, but its toleration could hardly be called enthusiasm:

"The preservation of ancient poetry is certainly no less rational than the preservation of ancient coins; for if the latter frequently contribute to rectify and ascertain the chronology of history, the former no less promote our knowledge of manners and pursuits of men in their respective periods."^m

The justification of the revival of ancient poetry on the grounds that it was a natural sequence to the renewal of interest in old coins and historical antiquity was frequently advanced during the later part of the century. The reviewer was one of many who could reconcile themselves to the revival of older literature as acceptable for a variety of reasons, but never because of its intrinsic value as literature for all time.

The writer of the paragraph in the Critical
Review represented another group. His implication^{was} that
 there might have been some sense to the publication of
 these "performances" if they ^{had been} ~~were~~ adapted to modern
 taste. It was probably this same reviewer who in the
 June, 1771, issue of the same magazine, in appraising
Poems by a Lady, said:

"The first poem in this collection is
 the ballad of Child Waters modernified.
 A refinement of language is not the only
 point in which the ballad is improved
 by the authoress. Besides rendering the
 conclusion more auspicious to virtue and
 humanity, she has retrenched some insipid
 amplifications, and suppressed some in-
 delicate circumstances in the story.
 Where the sentiment is varied, it is
 improved in poignancy; and though sim-
 plicity is sometimes diminished in
 polishing the coarseness, it is equally
 compensated by elegance."

It is evident that to adulterate ballads and adapt them
 to the modern taste was the easier and more lucrative
 path. The ridicule and neglect which the unpolished
 and unleavened poetry of earlier times received, must
 have reassured Percy that the editorial policy of the
Reliques was justified.

Despite Hailes' cooperation with Percy in the making of the Reliques, and the wide knowledge of Scottish ballads which his correspondence with Percy shows, he did no work of his own in connection with ballads except the early Foulis pamphlets. The first collector to follow in the wake of Percy's success with the treatment of popular poetry was David Herd, (1732-1810) clerk to an Edinburgh accountant. Archibald Constable spoke of Herd and George Paton as frequent visitors to his shop. "The late Mr. George Paton and Mr. David Herd soon found their way to me; they were judicious collectors but their means did not admit of giving much encouragement in the way of purchase. We used often to meet - not infrequently at John Dowies - and I derived from both a great deal of useful information on the subject of books in general, and the literature of Scotland in particular."⁽¹⁾

Herd, a collector as well as editor, is important not only for his publications, but for his manuscript collection of songs, which was drawn on by several later editors. Herd's generosity with his collection is in sharp contrast to Percy's jealous guarding of his folio manuscript, but it must be remembered that Herd's manuscript was of his own making and not a unique and

⁽¹⁾ Archibald Constable and his Literary Correspondents: 1.20

irreplaceable piece of antiquity. It was probably through the example and popularity of the Reliques that Herd began his collection. The leaven of Percy's work spread quickly and effectively and flared into action whenever it came in contact with a receptive mind.

In 1769 Herd published from his collection Ancient and Modern Scottish Songs, Heroic Ballads, etc., issued anonymously. The editor's preface gave as justification for the work the fact that Thomson's Orpheus Caledonius, published early in the century and the only anthology devoted solely to Scottish poetry, was confined to but a small number of Scottish songs, and had become very scarce. Herd paid due tribute to "the valuable collection of Percy", saying that he had intended "after the manner of Percy ... to have prefixed notes to the more ancient and historical poems in the collection"; for reasons of space he proposed to save the notes to put at the end of a second volume, for which he already had some materials. He went on to say that his collection was the response to the wish of many people that a collection of purely Scottish songs be recovered and published. In this one volume Herd thought he had gathered all the Scottish songs of repute, including upwards of one hundred more that were not in any collection, but still more songs were being recovered, and a second volume would be necessary.

Herd, being a Scotsman, was genuinely fond of his materials, and his preface was duly free of ostentatious apologies for the contents of the volume. He frankly avowed an affection for the old Scottish songs, which had "a forcible and pathetic simplicity, which at once lays hold on the affections; so that the heart itself may be considered the instrument which the Bard or Minstrel harmonizes, touching all its strings in the most delicate and masterly manner". And again: "... the pathetic and sentimental songs of Scotland ... may with truth be termed the poetry and music of the heart... Foreigners of the best taste have often candidly allowed it a preference to their own". With such an attitude towards his material it is not surprising that Herd did not follow the practice, illustrated so well by Percy, of patching and polishing the old ballads. He was, in fact, the first faithful editor of the ballads, and his collection was to prove almost unique for its trustworthiness.

The collection contained, as Herd said in the preface, songs gleaned from various miscellanies "together with larger ballads and poems" which had not previously been printed, and which had been collected by Herd himself. Well more than one hundred of the 260 pieces in the edition were unpublished Scottish songs which Herd had recovered. He grouped the songs alphabetically, and the ballads by

"separate classes". He did not further differentiate these classes, but they are roughly, historical, sentimental, and comic. Herd's title, including the phrase "ancient and modern", allowed him wide liberties, and freedom from the necessity of judging the age of his pieces, but in his inclusions he limited himself fairly strictly to genuinely old Scottish songs and ballads.

George Paton, (1720-1807) had much to do with the later history of the collection. Paton was one of the group of men in the thick of the antiquarian movement who published no work of their own but who contributed their knowledge and time, often unacknowledged, to the publications of their friends. Essentially Paton was a "ministrant rather than a creative spirit", but he ministered so well that there was little of important work done in Scottish antiquarian lore and ballad revival during his lifetime that did not owe much to his scholarship, ~~and~~ unselfish generosity and labour.

The failure of the book shop kept by Paton and his father was probably accelerated by the fact that both were keen students of antiquities and "when they met with any scarce or valuable book, they could never bring themselves to expose it for sale, but embodied it in their private collection, the fame of which soon reached far beyond the boundaries of Edinburgh."⁽¹⁾

⁽¹⁾ Hecht: Songs from David Herd's MSS. p.6.

It was this private collection that came to be the storehouse of information for all the antiquarians of the period. Kay's Edinburgh Portraits, speaking of Paton's library, said that it

"became a sort of common, where the antiquarian writers were wont to luxuriate, and whence they would return, like bees, each to his own particular locality, laden with the spoil obtained from the stores of this singularly obliging and single hearted individual".⁶⁾

It is impossible to tell how far the library was directly consulted by other men, but we have sufficient evidence of its utility in the stupendous amount of correspondence which Paton carried on with no fewer than 54 men, including Bishop Percy, Lord Hailes. Joseph Ritson, Gilbert Stuart, David Herd, Lord Buchan, Richard Gough, Thomas Pennant, and others of only slightly less prominence. These men were continually colling on Paton to give information, verify data, or procure books. He gave this information and aid fully and willingly with no apparent thought of gain or compensation. His services, his knowledge, his time, as well as his library seemed to have been at the disposal of anyone of his friends, or of any stranger who might ask. His celebrated library and his comprehensive scholarship became common property. Even a cursory review of the eight large volumes of his correspondence which are in the National Library of Scotland shows the amazing amount of aid which

⁶⁾ Kay: Edinburgh Portraits. I.169

he furnished other antiquarians. He himself never published, but the richness of his contribution to the movement will be seen later in the specific aid he gave, not only to Hailes, but to Ritson, Herd, Dalzell, and other antiquarians.

Dr. Hans Hecht has published the Percy-Paton correspondence,⁽¹⁾ which contains the story of the steps leading up to the publication of Herd's second edition. Briefly, what happened was this. Immediately after the publication of the 1769 volume, Paton sent a copy to Percy, who replied that he was anxious that the collector carry out the promise of his advertisement and prepare a second volume. Paton wrote repeatedly that the collector - the name Herd appeared only once, late in the correspondence - was not yet satisfied with his material. Some of the correspondence has been lost, but Paton apparently asked Percy to look over Herd's manuscript and favour the collector with his advice. Percy consented eagerly, and in August, 1774 Paton sent the manuscript to Easton Maudit for criticism and suggestions from the master. Percy now appears in a shabby light. Again and again he had asked that the manuscript be sent to him. When it finally arrived, he acknowledged its receipt at once and offered all manner of assistance. He wrote that some of the fragments contained

⁽¹⁾ The letters from Percy to Paton are in the National Library of Scotland, and were printed by James Maidment in Letters from Bishop Percy, etc. to George Paton. The letters from Paton to Percy are in the British Museum (Add.Mss. 32332) Selections from both sets are given in Hecht.

"charming hints, which might give occasion to very beautiful songs, if supplied and filled up, in the manner that old broken fragments of antique statues have been repaired and compleated by modern masters. I think I could fill up the breaches of some of them myself... I could furnish him myself with a good number of old Scots songs and poems, all perfect and compleat which have never yet been printed, and which I myself transcribed from an old manuscript at Cambridge, which was compiled by old Sir Richard Maitland, and many others might be transcribed by himself from the Bannatyne's MS. when I return it". He said further that he intended to publish a volume or two more like his Reliques, and "I shall then insert some of these fragments, if the editor will give me leave to transcribe and fill up the deficiencies ;.. in the manner I attempted before ... and from my book he may reprint such of them as suit his subject and plan ..."

Paton immediately sent the letter to Herd who showed it to Wotherspoon, the publisher of the volume. Wotherspoon wrote to Paton that he and Herd would cheerfully accept Percy's offer of assistance, and his restoration of some of the fragments, a decision inconsistent with Herd's general editorial policy, but probably due to the power of Percy's name, as editor of

(1) Letters from Bishop Percy &c. to George Paton. pp 46-48

the Reliques. Paton, of course, immediately passed the acceptance of his offer on to Percy. This was in August, 1774. The following March Paton wrote to Percy that the collector "is anxious to have your sentiments on the volume ... with advice how to arrange, and what remarks may be necessary". In July both Paton and Wotherspoon wrote to Percy and asked for the return of the manuscript. Percy then returned it, after having kept it nearly a year, with a letter which shows how he regarded the promises he had made. "I will send you ... some of the poems from Maitland, when I have had leisure to consider them, which I have not had once since I received your last MS. Collection of Songs, and only glanced my eye cursorily over that volume, which I have now returned, without having had time (from my other avocations) to make the least use of the contents. I hope now, in the course of next winter, to prepare a 4th volume of Reliques for the press; and when I have selected some of Maitland's poems for my own work, I shall see what I can spare for your friend's publication". Percy had neither completed any of the fragments, nor had he given any of the promised hints or suggestions. It is probably not unconnected with this incident that the paragraph in the preface of the first edition complimentary to the Reliques was omitted in the 1776 edition.

Herd's second edition, with 112 new pieces and occasional stanzas added to old pieces, practically doubled his material. The fresh collection, in two volumes, was completely rearranged, and now "divided into three parts: "Heroic Ballads; ...Sentimental, Pastoral and Love Songs; and Comic, Humourous and Jovial Songs". Beyond the omission of the complimentary reference to Percy's Reliques, the original preface was little changed, except that it seems a little less buoyant in the 1776 edition. Herd still included his high praise of Scottish song, but added, incongruously enough, the conventional idle-hours apology for his work. "The Editor shall anticipate the censure of the severe, by confessing them a work of slight importance, which hath no higher aim than mere amusement." Whether as mere amusement or not, Herd recovered and published nearly 200 Scottish songs that might have been lost but for him, and he transcribed them as he found them. Not a poet, he was the more easily free of the temptation to "emend", and his preface, in spite of the tacked-on apology, shows a man with an honest and unashamed appreciation of the native songs of his countrymen.

Herd had borrowed freely whatever he wished from older collections, particularly from Ramsay and from Thomson's Orpheus Caledonius. From the Reliques he took Young Waters, Sir Patrick Spens, Waly Waly, as well as the decorated

versions of Edom o' Gordon, Gil Morice, and The Heir of Linne, the last the only piece omitted from the second edition. Modern imitations interspersed with genuine folk poetry included Duncan and Kenneth by Henry Mackenzie, the ubiquitous Hardyknute, and a poem by Dr. Blacklock. These inclusions were foreign matter in the bulk of faithfully transcribed songs. Later editors have found Herd's versions of the songs, other than those taken from earlier collections, to be transcribed with scrupulous accuracy, and Professor Child considered the printed copies as reliable as the manuscript versions.

Herd edited no more Scottish poetry, but he continued to collect and include in his manuscript all the old Scots songs he found. His manuscript was to become instrumental in producing greater and more lasting work than even Herd's volumes. The first poet to make use of it was Robert Burns. The Henley and Henderson Centenary edition of Burns makes clear the poet's obligations to the collector:

"As regards unpublished material, we might speak in no measured terms of the Herd MS. (British Museum) - given by Herd to Archibald Constable - which has hitherto escaped the notice of Burns's editors; which includes all the songs, ballads, and scraps, that David Herd - the most indefatigable and conscientious of the old Scots collectors - had picked together; and which distinguishes between numbers unprinted and numbers printed in Herd's own 1769 and 1776 Editions or elsewhere. Burns may, of course, have had other knowledge of some of the matter here sequestered;

but that he had access to the MS. while it was in Herd's hands -(the probability is that it was submitted to him in the autumn of 1787)- and made large use of it in connection with the Museum is (as we think) made abundantly clear in our Notes. It supplied him with the beginnings of over twenty songs: some set down hitherto as wholly his own, and a few vaguely described as 'old', while the rest have been riddled with speculations and assertions ^(a) more or less unwarrantable and erroneous."

Dr. Hecht effectively disproves the theory held by James Maidment ^(a) that Paton "partly, if not wholly edited" Herd's first edition, and restores to Herd full credit for the publication. A careful examination of the evidence available, however, indicates that although Herd must get most of the credit for making the collection, some of it he must share with Wotherspoon, his publisher, who was very active in shaping the work. In a letter to Paton, speaking of an old ballad that had come to him, Herd said:

"The verses I arranged, and marked some notes - and shew'd them to Mr. Wotherspoon when he was publishing the last edition of the Scots Ballads; but he thought it too imperfect, and not of sufficient merit for having a place in the Collection" ^(a).

It was Wotherspoon who wrote to Paton accepting Percy's offer to help with the manuscript. Throughout this letter

^(a) Op.Cit. III. 296-297

^(a) Letters from Joseph Ritson, Esq. to Mr. George Paton: p.xiv-xv

^(a) Letters from Bishop Percy &c. to George Paton: p.80

Wotherspoon wrote in the first person plural, as though it were understood that the edition was a joint undertaking:

"We chearfully consent to his making the use he proposes of our MS. ... The publication of our second volume will necessarily be delayed some time. The first being out of print, we propose to begin by reprinting that with more perfect versions of some of the songs, expunging some of the most imperfect fragments, revising the orthography throughout, and annexing a glossary. In the meantime the 2nd volume will be preparing for the press in the same manner".⁽¹⁾

The evidence we have from Paton's letters is even more conclusive. On August 29, 1774 he wrote to Percy: "Mr. Herd, the collector of these songs, has given it to the printer, Mr. Wotherspoon, and both give you the indulgence requested".⁽²⁾ In a letter the following year requesting the return of the manuscript, Paton called Wotherspoon the "assistant collector". "I beg leave to inform you that Mr. Wotherspoon, the printer and assistant collector of the Scots Songs applied to me ..."⁽³⁾ A week after the dispatch of that letter it was Wotherspoon, not Herd, who wrote a sharp letter to Percy asking for the return of the manuscript.

The conclusion that Wotherspoon was more than the mere publisher of the volumes is strengthened by the

⁽¹⁾ Hecht: Songs from David Herd's MS. p.23

⁽²⁾ *ibid.* p.22

⁽³⁾ *ibid.* p.25

remarks of Burns who undoubtedly met Herd in Edinburgh. Burns frequented Dowie's tavern, the haunt of Herd, Paton, and Cummyng, and was, moreover, a friend of several members of the Cape Club, where Herd was a figure of prominence. There is no doubt that Burns possessed at least one edition of the collection. In one of the notes to Johnson's Musical Museum he said speaking of an old song: "A mutilated stanza or two are to be found in Herd's Collection"⁽⁶⁾. Here Burns was probably referring to the Herd manuscript. When he spoke of the book, he seemed to consider Wotherspoon the editor. He wrote to George Thompson, "I have not Pinkerton, but before me is Witherspoon's first volume (entitled Ancient and Modern Scottish Songs and Heroic Ballads)". In another letter to Thompson he asked, "Do you know the the beautiful little fragment in Wotherspoon's collection of Scot's Songs?

O gin my love were yon red rose, "⁽²⁾

Herd collected his material with some help from other people. He seems to have left the publication and editorial cares to Wotherspoon, who was later aided by the ever-generous George Paton. It was Wotherspoon⁽³⁾ who appended the glossary to the second edition, and to

⁽⁶⁾ Chambers-Wallace's Burns: IV.41

⁽²⁾ ibid, III.430

⁽³⁾ Paton to Percy, May 13, 1776. Brit. Mus. Add. Mss. 32332. f.108

him should go part of the credit for "the first classical collection"⁽¹⁾ of the old ballads.

Another edition of Herd's collection appeared in 1791, published by Lawrie and Symington. Many of the genuine old ballads collected by Herd were omitted from this edition, and in their place were printed Percy's Child of Elle, and some modern imitations, including some of Pinkerton's forgeries. Herd probably had nothing to do with this edition, and Wotherspoon had died in 1776. Evidently the taste and standards of Herd and Wotherspoon were not those of the century. It took many years for editorial ideals to climb back to the level of the example set by their publications.

Several scattered minor works, more or less closely connected with the revival of early Scottish literature were published during the century. A growing interest in comparative philology was reflected in a small and unnoticed publication⁽²⁾ of Kenneth Ferguson, a Scotsman who was Chargé d'Affaires at the court of Dresden. Ferguson was struck by the similarity of many of the German sounds and root words to those of his native Scottish, indicating

⁽¹⁾ Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border, ed. Henderson, 1902. I. 169

⁽²⁾ The Gaberlunzieman. An Old Scotch Ballad with Explanatory Notes. Goettingen, 1775.

an overlooked kinship of the languages. "Dr. Johnson", wrote Ferguson, "might certainly have succeeded more happily in analyzing and explaining many words if he had understood anything of the German". To illustrate his theory of the relationship of the languages Ferguson reprinted The Gaberlunzieman from Percy's Reliques, choosing that particular poem "because it has suffered little from the alterations of ignorant editors". As an appendix to the poem he printed a glossary of the Scotticisms, together with the German cognates. In another brief appendix he included a specimen list of other Scottish words that had close cognates in either Low German or High German.⁶

At least one man in Scotland familiarized himself with Ferguson's reprint of The Gaberlunzieman. He was John Callander, a Scottish advocate who, like Ferguson, was later a member of the Society of Scottish Antiquaries. In 1782, seven years after Ferguson's work, Callander published The Gaberlunzieman and Christ's Kirk on the Green. These poems were published not so much to revive them, as both were comparatively well known then,

⁶The selection from Percy's Reliques entitled Ancient and Modern Songs and Ballads, printed at Goettingen in 1767 was also very probably edited by Ferguson. It was a slight book with no preface, containing eleven selections frankly taken from the Reliques, the editor giving volume and page reference for nine of the eleven pieces.

but to illustrate Callander's etymological theories. The editor's preface pointed out that former etymologists had not attended to the great truth that at Babel the whole human race spoke but one tongue, and that now, though this tongue is spoken nowhere, it is paradoxically spoken everywhere, and that radical words of all languages can be traced back to it. His text resembles a variorum edition of Shakespeare. About an average of two lines of poetry leavens each page; the remaining space is devoted to notes explaining the derivation of words and their cognates in other languages.

The only acknowledgement of outside help that Callander gave the reader was that the Addenda to the book, in which Oriental cognates of words were discussed, was the work of David Doig, Rector of the Academy in Stirling. Callander's unacknowledged debts were much greater. Ferguson's edition of The Gaberlunzieman was published for the same reason as was Callander's, though with a more limited scope. It is almost beyond question that Callander's project was but an imitation and expansion of Ferguson's practically unknown work, for the contents and even the phrasing of Callander's preface resembles Ferguson's preface too closely for the similarity to be accidental. Callander did not say whence he derived his version of The Gaberlunzieman. It is identical with the

version supplied by Ferguson, which the latter admitted borrowing from Percy. Callander is, however, very explicit in giving the history of his text of Christ's Kirk on the Green, in which he followed Allan Ramsay, with the gaps filled in from the text of Bishop Gibson, both of whom were notoriously inaccurate. Apparently this was not Callander's sole offense of this nature. In 1818, long after his death, an article in Blackwoods Magazine accused him of plagiarism in his annotations on Milton's Paradise Lost, published by the Society of Antiquaries. An investigation by David Laing found the charge to be not without foundation, as, according to Laing "... his obligations were not sufficiently acknowledged"⁽¹⁾. James Maidment, the editor of the letters to Paton, said that "he appears to have borrowed more largely, than, without acknowledgment, was quite fair, from an old folio volume,⁽²⁾ the scarcity of which he probably thought was a tolerable security against detection"⁽³⁾. A similar statement might be made concerning Callander's borrowings from Ferguson.

Callander threw much of the drudgery of his work on the old antiquarian war-horse, George Paton. During the year 1781, while he was preparing the work, he wrote at least sixteen letters to Paton⁽⁴⁾ and received even more

⁽¹⁾ Transactions of the Scottish Society of Antiquaries. III.83-91

⁽²⁾ Hume's Commentary on Milton, London, 1690

⁽³⁾ Letters of Bishop Percy &c. to George Paton. p.x

⁽⁴⁾ ibid. pp.111-148

in reply. He was continually borrowing books or asking for heavy favours. Early in March he applied to Paton for the latter's copy of Bishop Gibson's Christ's Kirk on the Green. The same month he asked Paton to determine the size and form of the new publication and arrange for the printing. In the same letter he requested Paton to get for him Percy's - whose name he spelled Piercy, just as Ferguson had - copy of Peblis on the Play, but in this one request Paton could not oblige, as Percy had given the ballad, supplied him by Paton, to Pinkerton for inclusion in the second volume of Select Scottish Ballads. Less than a week later (March 28) with Paton evidently as helpful as ever, Callander asked him to correct the proofs. This Paton did. Callander later wrote to thank him for extensive corrections. The correspondence shows that Callander had several other ambitious plans, including an edition of Lyndsay, for which he hoped that Paton would write the life of the poet and make notes on the text. One wonders what Callander planned to contribute to the edition. The plans were never carried out. That Paton would have done his part carefully and without public acknowledgement is a safe assumption, for he had already provided Callander with the text, had labouriously copied missing parts from the Bannatyne manuscript, and had asked the assistance of Percy. The Bishop had replied that he was too busy with graver studies.

Scotland, particularly Edinburgh, did not lag behind London in the formation of societies for antiquarian research. Although in both countries these societies were formed for the encouragement of all branches of antiquarianism, the interest in topographical antiquities, and in coins, medals, and weapons - in fact, all the material remnants of antiquity- soon crowded out any interest in the less tangible charms of ~~the~~ early literature. The small amount of work in literary antiquarianism which these societies directly fostered is remarkable in view of the growing public interest in older literature and the amount of research done on the subject by individuals who were also members of the societies.

The largest and most influential of the antiquarian societies was the Society of Antiquaries of London. This society had had a slow growth after its beginning as an informal group around Humphrey Wanley. In 1717 it was formally organized with Le Neve as its first president, but it was not actually incorporated until 1751⁶, and the first volume of Archaeologia did not appear until 1770. The papers of the first twelve volumes of Archaeologia are almost all concerned with historical, topographical, and numismatic antiquity. Its literary papers

⑥Archaeologia: I.xxxix

were few and scattered, in spite of the fact that its roster contained such names as Edward Lye, Sir John Clerk, Thomas Warton, Malone, Percy, Farmer, Steevens, and Tyrwhitt. Both Ritson and Samuel Ireland had been rejected for membership. What literary papers were presented did not come from the more important members, who were content to do their work independent of the Society.

In 1758 Dr. John Ward presented to the society four essays on the English language. In 1776, 1778, and 1779 the Rev. Mr. Drake read before the society a series of papers On the Origin of the English Language. The Rev. Samuel Pegge's Observations on Dr. Percy's account of the Minstrels among the Saxons was read before the society in May 1766, in time for Percy to revise his essay, with a very poor grace, for the second edition of the Reliques in 1767. Towards the end of the century, during the years 1794-98 Professor De La Rue sent in four papers which were read, translated, and published. The first was a discussion of Robert Wace, the twelfth century Anglo-Norman poet. In the second paper he dealt with various twelfth century Anglo-Norman poets, including Phillipe de Than, Samson de Nanteuil, Geoffroi Gaimar, David, Benoit, and Guernes. The

⁽¹⁾ Archaeologia: V.306-317; 379-389; IX. 332-62

⁽²⁾ Archaeologia: XII.50-79; 297-336; XII. 36-67; 230-250

third paper was an account of the life and work of Marie de France, and the fourth a discussion of minor Anglo-Norman poets of the thirteenth century. De la Rue's papers were the only ones that were the result of an investigation of early literature, and his subjects were French poets rather than English. It was not primarily a literary society, and its contributions to literary antiquarianism were slight. The Society's lack of ardour for literary research can be illustrated by one instance. In 1753, an edition of Caedmon, to be the joint work of Lye and Wise, was proposed. In spite of the fact that a bookseller was willing to pay for the printing, the Society refused to stand the expense of engraving plates, and the project fell through.⁽¹⁾

The formation of a similar society for Scotland had been discussed informally in many an Edinburgh circle. The decisive step towards the establishment of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland was taken by the Earl of Buchan, who invited thirty-seven men to meet at his house on November 14, 1780 to take active steps in the matter. Fourteen of them came, and after one more preliminary meeting, the group met on December 18, and formed themselves into a regular and permanent body, with the Earl of Bute as President and the Earl of Buchan as Vice-President. In 1783, in spite of

⁽¹⁾ Nichols: Literary Anecdotes, V.403-404

the opposition led by Principal Robertson of the University of Edinburgh, who feared that the new Society might lessen the prestige of the University, the Society was granted a charter.⁽¹⁾

Like its big brother, the Society of Antiquaries of London, the Scottish society was not literary as its chief purpose. As in the case of the London Society, men who had done or were doing work on older literature were members, but the Society itself did not foster these studies. Callander, Kenneth Ferguson, Tytler, George Paton, Lord Hailes, and Bishop Percy were among the members of the Scottish Society. The papers read were archaeological, historical, genealogical, or topographical. Only one work in the field of early literature, Tytler's Poetical Remains of James I, which we shall discuss later, appeared among the early contributions of the Society. It rapidly declined in influence, and its history at the end of the eighteenth century and the first quarter of the nineteenth century was one of unproductivity and financial embarrassment.⁽²⁾

Similar learned societies in Scotland were more famous, but no more productive of early literary remains. The Highland Society investigated the authenticity of Ossian, and in 1802 contributed twenty guineas for Dr. Jamieson's projected Dictionary of the Scottish Language.

⁽¹⁾ Archaeologia Scotica. Vol.I, Preface.

⁽²⁾ Archaeologia Scotica. I.36; III.xxxi.

Neither the Royal Society nor the Select Society contributed anything of value to the revival of early literature. An interesting but mysterious society that was apparently flourishing about this time was The Society of Ancient Scots. The only information we have about this club came from a note by the secretary in one of their few publications.⁽¹⁾ According to this note it was an ancient club reestablished as a convivial and literary association in 1770, by "a select number of natives of Scotland resident in the Metropolis, who are fond of cherishing the memory of their common country, and cultivating a knowledge of its history and literature". To promote these objects each candidate for admission was required to accompany his application with a memoir of "some Scotsman eminent in arts, arms, letters, or science". By this condition of admission the Society soon came into possession of an enormous quantity of Scottish biography, and, according to the secretary, every Scotsman, of note had a "zealous if not able biographer". In 1820 the Society resolved to publish these sketches. Between thirty and forty volumes were planned. Only six were published, now apparently lost, but these few contained notices of no fewer than 277 Scottish poets. Members of the "literary and convivial association" probably paid little attention to the literary purpose of the Society, once their biographies

⁽¹⁾ Cf. Scottish Notes and Queries. Nov. 1888, pp.92-93.

"of a very original character, abounding in facts not generally known" were accepted, and they had become members. The existence of a society with such a requirement, however, indicates the pervasiveness of the renewed interest in the early literature and history of Scotland.

Nothing is more indicative of the difference between the literary scholarship of the eighteenth century and that of the nineteenth, than the fact that in the earlier century all the important works of research were done by individuals on their own initiative, while in the nineteenth century research in early literature was sheltered under the protection of several clubs and societies. As we have seen, the various antiquarian societies of the eighteenth century were of little help to the revival of early literature, despite the fact that most of the men prominent in the revival were members of one or more of the groups. Learned societies that would do productive work in literary antiquarianism were not to come until the following century when the founding of such groups as the Bannatyne Club, the Maitland Club, and more particularly the Scottish Text Society and the Early English Text Society was to assure the publication of modern and scholarly editions of the works that marked the first few centuries of English literature.

v

Studies in English Literary History

Fortunately or unfortunately, it was not until the nineteenth century that the revival of early literature became a popular movement. During the eighteenth century it was confined to the learned stratum; necessarily so, for before the findings of the antiquarians could be translated into popular terms there had to be an immense amount of detailed research. Chaucer could not be made the property of the people until his works were given a text something like the original, and his name had been cleared of some of the myths surrounding it. The eighteenth century scholar was content to do the labourious tasks of pure scholarship solely for the pleasure of the work; consequently there was a current of works of research feeding and being fed by the publication of the revived texts throughout the later part of the century.

As long as there remained a complete lack of any work on English literature as a whole, the little patches of knowledge produced by separate books which appeared during the revival were necessarily deprived of their full value and remained as isolated gleams of light, illuminating only their own small space. To weld these separate bits of knowledge into a whole, there was needed a book which would make a connected narrative of names, dates, and works,

putting each into some sort of connection with the others and making of the hitherto unrelated mass a fluent whole. Once a framework had been established, the work of subsequent scholars in filling in the blanks could go on apace. Up to the last quarter of the eighteenth century no work had been devoted to the history of English literature as a progressive development. The biographical dictionaries with their chronological arrangement of names, came nearest to giving an orderly narrative, but the story of English literature is not the story of a succession of names, and such dictionaries of English poets as those of Phillips and Cibber were not calculated to bring out the early history of English poetry. Ballads, romances, and some of the older poets had been introduced to the reading public by Percy, with explanatory notes that shed a beam of light here and there on the early history of English literature. A real attempt to write an account of the development of English poetry had never been made until Thomas Warton undertook the task. The separate introductory notes to the fragments published in Mrs. Cooper's Muses Library were hopelessly inadequate, and the book was very scarce. There existed no treatment of the progress of letters in Britain which would provide a background for a more detailed study of individual men

and periods. Both Pope and Gray had toyed with the idea of writing a history of English poetry, but neither had planned a chronological account; both planned to group the authors by classes.

The first orderly study of English poetry came with Thomas Warton's History of English Poetry. Consciously or unconsciously, Warton had been preparing for the task for twenty years, ever since the publication of the Observations on the Faerie Queen in 1754.⁽¹⁾ He had done a great amount of research in early English poetry for the two editions of the Observations, which was excellent preliminary work for the History, and in 1765 he wrote to Percy that he was writing the History and that his materials were almost ready.⁽²⁾ Warton's was an enormous task in view of the fact that in a large proportion of the work he was the first person to tread on the ground for centuries. For much of his information he had perforce to go to original sources, and his materials were often scattered or virtually inaccessible in what Tyrwhitt called, through bitter experience, "those sepulchres of MSS., which, by courtesy, are called libraries".⁽³⁾ It was nine years from the time that Warton ~~he~~ wrote Percy that his materials were ready that he was able to publish the first volume, even though his work was

(1) Cf. P. 26-7

(2) Publications of the Modern Language Association. 46.1166-1201

(3) Canterbury Tales, 1775-78. IV.167

lightened by the aid he received from Percy, Farmer, and most of the scholars of the day.

The first volume of the History was published in 1774, the second in 1778, and the third in 1781, the three volumes taking the account up to the Elizabethan age. It was originally intended that the work should be carried to the eighteenth century, but the completing volumes were never written. A fragment of a fourth volume was published in 1789, after Warton's death. The work omitted the Anglo-Saxon period and really began with the twelfth century. Warton justified his skipping over the early period on the grounds that it was not an integral part of English literature, and that nothing of literary value remained from that time: "...our Saxon poems are for the most part little more than religious rhapsodies, and ... scarce any compositions remain marked with the native images of that people in the pagan state."⁽¹⁾ As a substitute for the omission, the first volume included two dissertations: (1) On the Origin of Romantic Fiction in Europe, and (2) On the Introduction of Learning into Europe, neither of which has now any weight in criticism. In the first essay Warton accepted the theory advanced by Warburton⁽²⁾ and traced the Romances to an Arabian origin. The old Romances

⁽¹⁾ History: I.ii

⁽²⁾ Warburton: Edition of Shakespeare. II.287ff.

were Warton's particular delight⁽¹⁾, and his discussion of them was lingering and full, augmented by copious extracts. His texts were bad and his remarks are no longer authoritative, but he was able to point out the influence of the old Romances on the native poetry. The period of metrical Romances, together with that of the popular ballads, was among the few parts of early English literature which had an appeal for an audience outside the limited number of scholars. It seems to have been a favourite topic among the antiquarians themselves, for not only Warton, but Percy, Ritson, and Ellis gave the subject special attention. Two writers outside the antiquarians dealt with the subject in their own way. James Beattie, the author of The Minstrel, in an essay On Fable and Romance⁽²⁾ combined Warton's material with a description of the age of chivalry from St. Palaye. Clara Reeve, in a very feminine performance, of which the title is sufficient illustration⁽³⁾, waxed enthusiastic, in dialogue form, on the subject of the Romances. The only value of these two works to us is the fact that they were not written primarily for an audience of scholars or antiquarians, and therefore show the seepage of interest from the learned class.

(1) He had previously discussed them at length in the Observations
 (2) James Beattie: On Fable and Romance. in Dissertations
moral and critical. London, 1783

(3) Clara Reeve: The Progress of romance, through times, countries, and manners; with remarks on the good and bad effects of it, on them respectivley; in a course of evening conversations. 2vols. Colchester, 1785.

In both of his essays and in the text of the History Warton showed that hitherto isolated or even unknown facts were in reality closely connected, and formed units of a coherent pattern, although he by no means succeeded in clearly drawing the design of that pattern. In the body of his text Warton's method was to select one or more poems from each writer he introduced, and from them give generous quotations, a summary, or a paraphrase, together with his own comments and general remarks. There is fully as much quotation in the three volumes as there is author's text, and much of the text is only slightly relevant. Warton was exploring new and enchanting ground, and instead of keeping close to his subject, he could not resist the temptation to wander on bypaths and ramifications of bypaths. Whenever his narrative arrived at some minor topic in which Warton was ~~particularly~~ interested, particularly if it had to do with the old Romances, and more particularly if it gave him an opportunity to display his rare erudition, he stopped and expatiated at length. It is true that these digressions, almost as much as the major topics of discussion, were useful in showing the eighteenth century that the Middle English period was not an unlearned and unrefined chaos; but the numerous irrelevant discursions

gave the work a rambling formlessness that was severely criticized in Warton's own generation and after. The sprawling disorder of the work deprived it of much potential value. Without a neat tight sequence of events with extraneous information sacrificed for the sake of coherence, the book developed into a reference work, rather than a book to be read consecutively, and, much as both were needed, the latter kind would have been more valuable. It is much easier to defend the fullness of Warton's extracts, for he quoted from works which were unavailable to the general public. Many of the originals existed only in manuscript or in scarce early printed editions whose existence had been all but completely forgotten. The frequent specimens from the early poets also served as valuable cumulative evidence that such a thing as poetry existed in an age commonly considered as without literature.

The dominating figure of the first volume is, of course, Chaucer.⁽¹⁾ In the second volume Warton took up Chaucer's contemporaries and immediate successors whose very names were unknown to his eighteenth century audience. In his discussion of these neglected poets Warton showed his poise as a critic. He did not magnify their intrinsic worth or importance, carried off by the glamour of his

① Cf. p. 209f for Warton's treatment of Chaucer.

discovery of them, as Gray was led to overestimate the powers of Lydgate,⁽¹⁾ and Ritson, later, the worth of Minot.⁽²⁾ Nor did Warton take the still easier course of comparing the poets of the ~~poets of the~~ Middle Ages with those of the eighteenth century, and thus under-rate the intrinsic ability and importance of the earlier poets, for there could be no doubt as to the outcome of such a contest.

Although Warton found Gower pedestrian and pedantic, a poet who wrote "in the tone of a scholar and moralist on the most lively topics", his work was ~~suffi-~~^{deemed} ~~ciently recendite~~ to "have been sufficient to rescue the reigns of Edward the third and Richard the second from the imputation of barbarism."⁽³⁾ Lydgate, from whom he quoted Lyfe of our Lady, he judged "tedious and languid".⁽⁴⁾ Stephen Hawes he admired, and always referred to with respect, but he found Occleve dull. His judgments of these and later fifteenth century and early sixteenth century figures were close to the valuations of later critics who have had greater advantages of knowledge and perspective. A large section of the second volume was

⁽¹⁾ Works of Gray. Ed. Gosse, 1884. I.393.

⁽²⁾ Preface to edition of Minot. London, 1795

⁽³⁾ History: II.1-2

⁽⁴⁾ ibid. II.52

given over to a discussion of the Chatterton-Rowley poems, which Warton, with evident reluctance, pronounced spurious.

Warton planned to touch only the high spots of Scottish poetry, but of four Scottish poets, Barbour, Blind Harry, Dunbar, and Douglas he gave rather full accounts. Barbour and Blind Harry he treated generously, remarking that they had "adorned the English language by a strain of versification, expression and poetical imagery, far superior to their age"⁽¹⁾ Dunbar was given twenty pages, with accounts of The Thistle and the Rose, The Golden Targe, and The Seven Deadly Sins; Warton characterized him as "the first who had appeared with any degree of spirit in this way of writing (satirical) since Pierce Plowman". Much of his material on Dunbar he got from Lord Hailes.⁽²⁾ He gave a long account of Lyndsay's Dreme and brief notices of some of his other poems,⁽³⁾ but most of his lengthy discussion of Lyndsay is digression on the poet's background. In the course of his treatment of Gawin Douglas, Warton, by implication, but by implication only, showed his honest belief that the old poets were really poets, and not merely crude versifiers. He turned the Prologue to May into prose to show the reader that its poetic power was not dependent on its form. He placed the prose in juxtaposition to the original and pointed

⁽¹⁾ History: I.318

⁽²⁾ Pinkerton's Literary Correspondence: I.33

⁽³⁾ History: II.295-326

out that "divested of poetic numbers and expression they still retain their poetry; and ... appear like Ulysses, still a king and conqueror, although disguised like a peasant". Here the old "makaris" were coming into their own and were being recognized as possessing qualities which the Augustans lacked.

In a footnote Warton gave a brief account of James I.⁽¹⁾ of Scotland. He spoke of James' "poem called the King's Complaint" as an allegorical poem in seven line stanzas. "The subject was suggested to the poet by his own misfortunes, and the mode of composition by reading Boethius. At the close he mentions Gower and Chaucer as seated on the steppys of rhetoryke". Warton gave the exact whereabouts of the manuscript, "Bibl. Bodl. MSS. Selden. Archiv. B. 24. chart. fol.", and later quoted the first two stanzas of the King's Quair, remarking "This piece is not specified by Bale, Dempster, or Mackenzie". Warton spoke of Major's mention of James' libellus artificiosus, and Bale's mention of James' Super Uxore futura, but did not connect them with what he called the King's Complaint. Undoubtedly they were all talking about the same poem. To Warton, then, and not to William Tytler,⁽²⁾ should go the credit for really discovering the King's Quair for his generation.

⁽¹⁾ History: II.125

⁽²⁾ Cf. p. 300f.

Warton's History and Percy's Reliques were the two outstanding works in the latter half of the eighteenth century to which antiquarians turned for spiritual support and for models to imitate. Warton's peculiar fitness for his task lay in the fact that he himself was a poet with a deep interest in the romantic past. Despite his sincere love for early literature he rarely forgot that he was an Augustan; he always respected the taste of his age enough so that he was never bold or unrefinedly enthusiastic in proclaiming the merits of the early writers. There lingered about Warton's History, as Lounsbury says, "an apologetic air of the eighteenth century, which talked as if it had something of a contempt for itself for taking interest in an age when neither language nor poetry had reached the supreme elegance by which both were then distinguished"⁶⁾. That attitude is certainly in the History; it was almost as if a social pressure prevented the author from treating his subject as he himself seemed inclined. In his introduction Warton wrote: "We look back on the savage condition of our ancestors with the triumph of superiority; we are pleased to mark the steps by which we have been raised from rudeness to elegance; and our reflections of this subject are accompanied with a conscious pride, arising in great measure

⁶⁾ Lounsbury: Studies in Chaucer. III.247

from a tacit comparison of the infinite disproportion between the feeble efforts of remote ages, and our ~~xxx~~ present improvements in knowledge⁽⁴⁾". It seems almost unbelievable that this remark should have come from a literary historian, and it is certain that Warton did not subscribe to its full and groundless conceit, but like other antiquarians he felt it politic to make his deferential bow to the smugness of his own age, from which he himself was not immune. Consequently, the work has an apologetic, defensive tone, like that of a man who has been found playing a child's game, and who thereupon explains its philosophic intricacies, to justify his condescension.

Warton's real task, though he was probably not conscious of it, was to write the story of English poetry in such a way that the early poets would gain critical respectability, and would be considered worthy of further research into their works and times. Happily he did not follow the plan of Gray or Pope; by giving a chronological survey he was able to show the gradual and imperceptible melting of one age into another. In occasional digressions he further showed the relationship between English and continental literature. It is unfortunate that the History was not continued to the eighteenth century,

⁽⁴⁾ History: I.1

for then Warton's readers would have been compelled to see the links between contemporary literature and the whole literary tradition up to that time, and they would have been able to set a truer value on the productions of their own period. At any rate, Warton's method in the study was a striking advance over anything that had yet been done. His great love of details and his apparent desire to parade his own extensive knowledge led him to pile up more facts than the work could comfortably digest, but in spite of this commonly remarked flaw, his work became the guide and standard authority for scholars for many years to come. It is necessary to judge Warton's History by what had been done on the subject before him, rather than by what has been done since, on the firm basis of his pioneer work.

The periodical reviewers were friendly, as they interpreted Warton's work as a history of the emergence of English letters from barbarism to their own refined times. They took Warton's conciliatory gesture at its face value, and concluded that the main value of the work was as an exaltation of the eighteenth century and its literature. With unshakable smugness the Monthly Review⁽⁶⁾ commended the idea when the first volume appeared: "To mark the gradual formation of taste, the slow but successful pursuit of truth,

⁽⁶⁾ Monthly Review. April, 1774. p.289

character and nature; to observe the efforts of the human mind, making its way through ages, from the depths of Gothic barbarity, till it exults in the full expansion of classical and philosophical splendor;- this ⁽¹⁾ is one of the noblest and most interesting objects of human curiosity and investigation". The Gentleman's Magazine was more heartened by the prospect of coming volumes than by the first. "The farther he proceeds in his researches, and the nearer approaches he makes to modern times, the more flowery doubtless will be his path, and his prospect more clear and extensive". After the publication of the third volume, the Monthly Review ⁽²⁾ remarked: "Mr. Warton is now arrived at that period of his History in which the poetry of England begins to assume a more cultivated and classical appearance". Such comments show the complacency of the critics, but they can be partly attributed to Warton's own slightly apologetic air. It was as favourable a reception as he could expect from the average eighteenth century reviewer.

But a new man, and with him a new spirit, had entered the field of literary antiquarianism. In 1782, a year after the publication of Warton's third volume, Joseph Ritson published his Observations on the three first volumes of the History of English Poetry. In a familiar letter to the

⁽¹⁾ Gentleman's Magazine. August, 1774. p.370

⁽²⁾ Monthly Review. February, 1782. p.81

the author. It was published anonymously, but Ritson took no pains to conceal his authorship. With true Ritsonian ingenuity he purposely had his pamphlet printed in the same format as the history, so that it might be bound as an appendix to "that celebrated work". After a taunting and insolent introduction he picked out Warton's inaccuracies and plagiarisms in point after point, detecting a little more than 100 errors in all. On the strength of these errors he branded the author "a SWINDLER", and his work "a tissue of falsehood from beginning to end" and "a monument of disgrace to yourself and your country". The accuracy^(a) of almost every one of Ritson's petty charges was unquestionable, but his manner was indefensible, particularly since Warton's errors concerned minor points in an encyclopedic work. That Warton's History was not continued was undoubtedly caused partly, if not entirely, by this savage abuse - but he was not to be the only antiquary to feel Ritson's venomous lash.

The eighteenth century gentleman was slow in becoming anything else as far as his attitude toward early literature was concerned. Mr. T. Falconer, writing to Charles Gray in 1774, remarked:^(a) "Warton's account is

^(a) Op.Cit. p.33

^(a) Ibid. p.48

^(a) Spurgeon: ~~K.438~~ Five centuries of Chaucer Criticism. I.438

entertaining in many parts; but his extracts before the time of Chaucer were so uncouth that I would as soon attempt the Chinese". Horace Walpole, in a letter to Mason took the most Tory of Tory attitudes: "Mr. Warton has amassed all the parts and learning of four centuries, and all the impression is that those four ages had no parts or learning at all ... I never saw so many entertaining particulars crowded together with so little entertainment and vivacity ... I question whether they took their metres for anything more than rules for writing prose."⁽¹⁾ There was no changing of opinions so deep set as these. The men who held them would have to die before a new taste could become established.

The gap in Warton's work, his lack of treatment of English literature before the twelfth century was partially filled by a little known work which was published three years later, the Biographia Literaria⁽²⁾ of John Berkenhout. Berkenhout, a physician, naturalist, and miscella-

⁽¹⁾ Walpole to Mason, April 7, 1774. Walpole's Letters: VIII.438

⁽²⁾ Biographia Literaria; or a Biographical History of Literature: containing the lives of English, Scottish, and Irish Authors, from the dawn of letters in these kingdoms to the present time, chronologically and classically arranged. Vol. I from the beginning of the fifth to the end of the sixteenth century. London, 1777. [No more published]

neous writer, had been planning this work for nearly twenty years. He intended it to consist of four quarto volumes, the first covering the fifth to the sixteenth centuries, the ~~second~~^{and} third, the seventeenth century, and the fourth, the eighteenth century.⁽¹⁾ Only the first volume was ever published.

Berkenhout was not primarily a scholar, but, as was the case with many an eighteenth century man of learning, his scholarship was no less for that. The one volume published is plainly the result of much painstaking labour, but the drudgery is concealed by the author's vigorous and entertaining style. There is an enjoyable gusto about the work. He confesses early that he likes old books, and by his ironic apology makes it clear what was the attitude of his age to such an eccentricity: "...but what plea can be urged for a man who, in this age of bon ton, should find real amusement in turning over a parcel of old musty books?"⁽²⁾ Despite his irony, the pull of the age was too strong even for Berkenhout's independent mind, and he felt compelled to strike the fashionable pose by saying that his work was not a serious occupation, but "the amusement of his hours of leisure and relaxation".

The book itself is, as the title indicates, a collection of biographies of literary people, posing as

⁽¹⁾ University of Edinburgh Library. Laing MSS. II.422

⁽²⁾ Op. Cit. p.ii

a history of literature. In this respect Berkenhout is a step backward from Warton, returning to the old conception of the history of literature as ~~the~~ accumulation of the works of many men, each man in a compartment of his own. In the preface, however, which is as interesting to us as the main body of the work, he gives in a connected narrative a precis of the history of English literature from the fifth through the sixteenth century. His account is worth going into in detail, as it shows the extent of the knowledge of the time in regard to early English literature through one who, though not one of the foremost scholars of the day, was still no mere hack writer.

The account began with the Druids, a favourite subject of speculation in the eighteenth century.⁶⁾ Berkenhout, unlike most of his contemporaries, admitted that practically nothing was known on the subject. For the sixth century he had a short discussion of Gildas, the first

⁶⁾ The eighteenth century mind had been fascinated by the opportunities afforded by the legendary figure of the Druid. The utmost in ignorant audacity was reached by a contribution which appeared in the Edinburgh Magazine for June, 1788. This was "A Druid's Tale; written by himself", of which the editor says in the introduction, "... the following narrative is translated from a Greek manuscript, which was lately discovered among some other Druidical remains. In it a Druid relates some misfortunes of his youth, which had induced him to forsake the world, and retire to the duties and consolations of religion..." The editor anticipated the reader's puzzlement at the finding of a Greek manuscript among "other Druidical remains", and explained the choice of language by pointing out that the Carthaginians often reached the south coast of England and naturally taught Greek to any stray Druid who came along. The whole incredible thing was apparently done in utter seriousness.

historian, whom he condemned; for the seventh, he devoted a few sentences to Adhelm, Bishop of Shireburn, "the first Englishman to write in Latin verse". In the eighth century lived Alcuinus, who "wrote on a variety of subjects, in a style by no means inelegant", and the Venerable Bede, after which there was a gap until "Alfred, toward the latter end of this century, produced a transient gleam amidst universal obscurity"; then darkness until the eleventh century.

Berkenhout mentioned by name, but did not comment on some Norman ecclesiastics favoured by William the Conqueror:

Lanfranc, Ingulphus, Anselm, and Godfrey. He spoke of

"one Geoffrey, a schoolmaster of Dunstable", author of

"St. Catherine, a dramatic composition", generally supposed to be the first theatrical performance in Great Britain,

but Berkenhout himself believed that miracle plays dated

from an even earlier period. Then he skipped rapidly to

the twelfth century. "Our history of English, or rather

Saxon poetry begins in this century; not because we had

no poets in earlier times, but because none of our vernac-

ular poems, ... can be deduced from an earlier period. There

are indeed a great number of manuscript poems in our public

libraries, which are supposed to have been written soon after

the conquest; but the dates are uncertain, and besides, they

are too contemptible to deserve notice. Even those of the

twelfth century are in general very simple, not to say silly

compositions".

It is evident that Berkenhout knew nothing of Old English. His audacity in writing a history of English literature from the fifth to the end of the sixteenth centuries in the face of such ignorance was not so great as it seems to us. In the first place, his ignorance was shared by much more learned men than himself. The number of men versed in Old English at this time could not have been more than ten - a generous estimate. Furthermore, it was the opinion of all authorities on English literature, including, as we have seen, Warton, that, even by the widest stretch of the imagination, there was nothing that could be called literature in Anglo-Saxon times. Berkenhout dodged the issue gracefully by dealing only with those men of letters who wrote in Latin, until he stood on safe ground with the men who wrote recognizable English.

Having thus dismissed Anglo-Saxon literature, and pausing only long enough to mention Roger Bacon and Matthew Paris, Berkenhout took his account to the fourteenth century, where he found Chaucer and Wicliff the only two luminaries. He did not discuss their work. Of Chaucer he said: "I forbear giving any specimen of Chaucer's poetry, out of compliment to the reader, whom I suppose acquainted with his works."⁹ ...As to our old English poems, songs, and scraps, prior to Chaucer, they are valuable only to the antiquarian; but

⁹) Apparently Berkenhout's work was aimed at a different audience from that of Headley's Select Beauties of Ancient English Poetry, published ten years later. Headley omitted giving

though they may have little intrinsic merit, they are read as curiosities ... It is remarkable that in this century Barbour and blind Harry, two Scotch poets, wrote in a language much nearer modern English, than Gower and Chaucer, their cotemporaries". Then, "On entering the fifteenth century, the first literary figure of our attention is John Lydgate, the poet. He was a man of some genius, and had the merit of improving considerably the language and harmony of preceding bards". After telling of the invention of printing and the growth of morality plays, Berkenhout finally emerged: "like a traveller who began his journey whilst the sun was yet far beneath the horizon, I rejoice to find myself at last in the daylight of the sixteenth century ... the most diligent enquirer will find among our English authors, previous to the invention of printing, very few books that will afford him either pleasure or instruction".

A good example of the breaking up of the neo-classical rules of criticism under the reasoning of that same "common-sense" on which they were supposed to be based can be seen in Berkenhout's defense of Shakespeare against the attacks of Voltaire, and his followers, with which he ended his preface:

any specimens of Chaucer, as well as of Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, and Milton, because though they are "familiar to us in conversation" they are nevertheless "not universally either read or understood".

"I never saw, or read, a tragedy, or comedy fettered by the unities, which did not seem improbable, unnatural, and tedious. Can any thing be more ridiculous than to imagine, because the Greeks thought fit to prescribe certain arbitrary rules for the composition of tragedy and comedy, that therefore every other nation, to the end of time, was bound to observe these rules, and precluded from inventing any other species of dramatic entertainment? ... The more I consider these Greek unities, the more I am convinced of their absurdity. ... If these unities had existed in Nature, Shakespeare was so well acquainted with her, that I trust he would have found them out. ... They were the invention of dullness, and are only leading strings for puny poetasters.

In the main body of his book Berkenhout divided the writers into eight classes: Historians, Divines, Lawyers, Physicians, Poets, Philosophers, Grammarians, and Miscellaneous Writers. Within each class the biographies were arranged chronologically. He took up for the poets none earlier than Richard I., followed by John Hanvill, Joseph of Exeter, and Chaucer, Lydgate, Skelton and a few minor men. Poets he strangely omitted include Dunbar, James I., and Henryson of the Scottish poets, and Occleve of the English. For each writer he gave a short biographical sketch followed by a list of his works. For those figures which came within the period Warton had treated, Berkenhout drew heavily on the History; otherwise he relied on the usual authorities - Bale, Tanner, Dempster, Anthony a Wood, Mackenzie, and the Biographia Britannica.

⑥ Wood, Ames, Mackenzie, and the Biographia Britannica.

Berkenhout's volume went some way, but not far, to supplement Warton's History. It is fairly accurate, and written in a very readable style. His treatment of pre-sixteenth century writers obviously would not go far in altering the current opinion as to their merits. The chief value of the work to us is as a mirror of eighteenth century knowledge regarding early English literature.

⑥ Joseph Ames: Typographical Antiquities ... London, 1749. Without Ames' Typographical Antiquities the researches of the antiquaries of the last half of the century would have been even more difficult than they were. Ames resolved the confusion of early printed books into some sort of order. The first edition of his work appeared in 1749. By going not to catalogues but to the books themselves, he was able to give much accurate information. He gave a chronological list of printers up to 1600, with a list of the works of each, short accounts of the printing at various places, Oxford, Cambridge, Ipswich, St. Albans, Norwich, etc., and "the general history of printing in England. Containing besides several private books, and such as could not be ranged under the foregoing printers, an account of those printed abroad by Englishmen, and others printed for them. Also several orders, acts, proclamations, patents &c relating thereto; for the better illustrating this subject before the year 1600". The usefulness of the work can be estimated from the number of times it is cited by the antiquaries. The second edition, edited by William Herbert in 1785, was tripled in size. Herbert added fuller descriptions of the books, with occasional extracts, as well as much new material. Ames created a little island of solid ground from which the scholars following him could venture out into the uncharted seas.

The curve of interest in Anglo-Saxon studies is curiously different from that of the interest in early literature as a whole. Toward the end of the seventeenth century "students of the language [Anglo-Saxon] had been ninety-three years without a dictionary, thirty-two years without a grammar, and thirty-one years without a general catalogue of existing manuscripts"⁽¹⁾. At the close of the seventeenth and the first quarter of the eighteenth century there was a flare-up in the study of Anglo-Saxon. Marshall, Nicolson, and Hickes published grammars, and Thwaites, Rawlinson, and William Elstob edited texts. The enthusiasm of the workers carried the brief movement along on its own momentum. The reading public was completely unprepared for it, and the lack of financial support prevented many a projected text from appearing. The flare-up had been brilliant but unsustainable. Instead of growing in power and volume parallel with the study of medieval and popular literature, the study of Anglo-Saxon waned during the latter half of the century, and but a few scattered works⁽²⁾ appeared until Sharon Turner's History of the Anglo-

⁽¹⁾ Eleanor Adams: Anglo-Saxon Scholarship in Great Britain, p.85

⁽²⁾ In the preface to the Dictionary Dr. Johnson, beginning his discussion with Alfred's Boethius, made free use of earlier work in Anglo-Saxon. In particular he borrowed from Lye's edition of the Etymologicum of Junius.

Saxons once more threw open the field.

The most important work of Anglo-Saxon scholarship in the later eighteenth century was Lye's Anglo-Saxon Dictionary, published in 1772. Edward Lye (1694-1767) had edited Junius' Etymologicum in 1743, to which he had added an outline of Old English and Gothic grammar. It was Lye who had collated Percy's version of the Five Pieces with the originals. His Anglo-Saxon dictionary was the labour of nearly thirty years. Lye began it in 1743, but died in 1767 when only thirty sheets had been printed. The Rev. Owen Manning⁽¹⁾ (1721-1801) edited the rest of the work and published it in 1772. Besides the dictionary, the two volumes contained a grammar of the Saxon and Gothic languages in Latin, and a number of specimens of Anglo-Saxon: "Fragmenta Ulphilana Epistolae Paulae ad Romanos, Chartae, Sermo de Antichristo, Fragmentum Chronici Saxonici, and Manumissiones". Lye's dictionary was one of the last works of English learning to be written in Latin. The meanings of the Anglo-Saxon words were given in Latin, thereby losing all chance to show vividly the connection between modern English and Anglo-Saxon. The title, introduction, and notes ^{were} ~~are~~ all in Latin, and the specimens were given in the original and in a Latin translation. To judge from the scarcity of

⁽¹⁾ Manning himself in 1788 printed King Alfred's Will, with notes and illustrations. The will had been found in the Register of Newminster, Winchester, earlier in the century. (Nichols: Literary Anecdotes. III.204)

mention of the book in later works, Lye's dictionary was ~~in~~ in little use during the remaining part of the century. Those who had need of an authority on Anglo-Saxon still went back to Hickes' Thesaurus, rather than to the more recent work.

The year after the publication of Lye's dictionary Daines Barrington, an advocate and a member of the Society of Antiquaries, succeeded in publishing The Anglo-Saxon Version from the Historian Orosius, by Alfred the Great.⁽¹⁾ Both Thwaites and Elstob had previously planned to edit the work. Pegge, who had purchased Elstob's manuscript, tried to persuade Manning to edit it. Manning declined, and Daines Barrington, in lack of a better man, became the editor.⁽²⁾ Barrington used Elstob's transcript, which he did not trouble to collate with the manuscript source in the Cotton collection, except at difficult spots. The volume contains the Anglo-Saxon originals, including Ohthere's voyage, and a free translation into modern English. Barrington took what liberties he chose in making the work intelligible to readers, as he explained in his preface, and covered all his sins of scholarship with the blanket excuse: "There are so few who concern themselves about Anglo-Saxon literature that I have printed the work chiefly for my own

(1) The Anglo-Saxon Version from the Historian Orosius, by Alfred the Great. Together with an English Translation from the Anglo-Saxon. London, 1773

(2) Nichols: Literary Anecdotes. IV.122

amusement, and that of a few antiquarian friends"⁽¹⁾. Barrington's editing left much to be desired, but it is noteworthy that he gave an English translation, a course which he reasonably defended on the grounds that the modern English language could thus be shown to be obviously derived from Anglo-Saxon, and that English was becoming so generally understood among the literati of Europe that it was no longer necessary to employ Latin for such a work. In his Miscellanies (London, 1781) Barrington included Othhere's Voyage and a map of Europe, both taken from his edition of Orosius. He gave as his reason for the reprint "that the number of copies which I published from King Alfred's translation was very small, and consequently cannot have fallen into the hands of many readers."⁽²⁾

Lye was the last Anglo-Saxon scholar of the eighteenth century to carry on the traditions of Hickes the and Elstobs. The work of Manning and Barrington was negligible in importance and influence. Anglo-Saxon was still too remote, and too universally unknown to concern the popularizers of early literature. The language was taught nowhere, and it was not generally recognized as the root of modern English. Middle English was difficult for even the most learned scholars, and there was much less incentive

⁽¹⁾ Op.Cit.xxxiii

⁽²⁾ Miscellanies. p.453

to learn the far more difficult older language. Even eighteenth century "curiosity", which carried its possessors through incredibly labourious tasks of detailed research, on what often seems to us unworthy subjects, could not provide enough incentive to learn a barbarous language in which nothing of literary value had been written. The attitude of Warton toward Saxon poetry can be taken as typical of the late eighteenth century scholar. His reason for ignoring Anglo-Saxon literature in his History was "that a legitimate illustration of that jejune and intricate subject would have almost doubled my labour, that the Saxon language is familiar only to a few learned antiquarians, that our Saxon poems are for the most part little more than religious rhapsodies ... every reader that reflects for but a moment on our political establishment must perceive that the Saxon poetry has no connection with the nature and purpose of my present undertaking. Before the Norman Accession ... we were an unformed and unsettled race. That mighty revolution obliterated almost all relation to the former inhabitants of this island. The beginning of these annals seems therefore to be most properly dated from that era when our national character began to dawn."⁽⁶⁾

Joseph Ritson immediately saw the fallacy of Warton's argument, and his first attack in Observations was

⁽⁶⁾History. I.vi

on Warton's excuse for omitting to treat Anglo-Saxon:

"You, sir, have sometimes been a biographer; and did you ever find it necessary to commence the story of your hero at the 15th or 16th year of his age, and to assert that the time of his birth and infancy held no connection with the story of his life, because forsooth, he was become a very different person when grown up and sent to college from what he was when born, breeched, and sent to school? ...The truth is that the origin and fundamental principles, as well of our language, as of our poetry, are to be sought for among the remains of Saxon literature, and he who shall tell us that the English and Saxon languages have no sort of connection with each other, is either deceived himself, or finds it in his interest to deceive others,- by sheltering his own ignorance or inactivity under the formidable and laboured shew of difficulty and uselessness, equally visionary, delusive, and pernicious".⁽¹⁾ Ritson had perceived, better than Warton, the true relationship of Old English and Modern English, but Ritson himself knew no Anglo-Saxon, much as he probably would have liked to know it. His righteous indignation was less for the purpose of defending a neglected literature than for scoring off Warton.

Before ignorance of Anglo-Saxon could be dispelled and the old literature brought to the modern reader, two

⁽¹⁾ Op.Cit. p.2

preliminary steps were necessary. In the first place it was necessary that facilities be granted for formally teaching the language in a university, both that it might be known to future scholars, and that it might acquire an academic respectability. This was achieved before the century closed. The will of Sir Thomas Rawlinson, who had been a student at Oxford in the days of Hickee and Thwaites, established a professorship of Old English at Oxford. By the terms of his will, the project was not to be carried out until forty years after his death, which occurred in 1755. In 1795 the Professorship was established, and the ground was ready for the greater work of the following century. In the second place, the current impression that Anglo-Saxon literature consisted entirely of religious rhapsodies and a few translations from the Latin had to be erased by exhaustive work among the existing manuscripts. This task fell on the willing shoulders of Sharon Turner (1768-1817), whose History of the Anglo-Saxons showed the extent and variety of the literature of the early inhabitants of England.

When he was still a boy Turner had read the Death Song of Ragnar Ladbrog, which had been published in Percy's Five Pieces, and in other collections during the century. The poem aroused in the boy a passionate interest in the study of Anglo-Saxon and Icelandic. After sixteen years

of study, spent mostly in the British Museum where he found an abundance of practically untouched material, Turner published The History of the Anglo-Saxons from the Earliest Period to the Norman Conquest. The first volume was issued in 1799, the second and third in 1801, and the fourth in 1805.

Turner's work, though primarily a history, is extremely important to students of literature in that it was based on hitherto almost unknown Anglo-Saxon manuscripts. Among other valuable contributions to the recovery of Anglo-Saxon literature, he published in the fourth volume of his work the first translations from Beowulf ever to appear. Only selected passages from the early parts of the poem, about eight pages in all, are given, and the versions differ considerably from those of modern scholarship, but this detracts little from Turner's services to Anglo-Saxon literature. The first mention of the poem of Beowulf occurs in Humphrey Wanley's catalogue of the Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, printed in Hickes' Thesaurus, where the poem is described as a work "in which one Beowulf, a Dane of the Royal race of the Scylding, waged war against the reguli of Sweden⁽¹⁾." There is nothing besides the brief mention of the poem and a transcript of forty lines in the Anglo-Saxon text. Beyond

⁽¹⁾ Hickes: Linguarum Vett. Septentrionalium Thesaurus
3 vols. London, 1703-05. p. 238ff.

the transcriptions made by the Icelandic scholar G.J. Thorkelin 1787, which were not used until 1815, the only notice taken of the poem during the whole eighteenth century was by Pinkerton in the preface to his edition of Barbour. "There is", he wrote, "in the Cotton Library a noble specimen of Anglo-Saxon poetry of the tenth century, ~~being~~, being a romance of the wars between Denmark and Sweden; and it is much to be wished that it were published with a translation."⁽¹⁾ It seems likely that Pinkerton was made aware of the existence of the poem either from Hickee or through his correspondence with Thorkelin. His reference seems to have been entirely overlooked by later scholars. An edition of Beowulf, edited by Thorkelin with a Latin translation, was published in Denmark in 1815, but it was not until over twenty years later that a complete English translation appeared. Though Turner described the manuscript as containing "a narration of the attempt of Beowulf to wreck the ~~fæ~~the or deadly feud on Hrothgar, for a homicide he has committed", he recognized its importance, and said, "it is perhaps the oldest poem of an epic form in the vernacular language of Europe which exists."⁽²⁾

In the same volume Turner gave a chapter on Anglo-Saxon versification,⁽³⁾ which he admitted puzzled him,

⁽¹⁾Pinkerton: Barbour's Bruce. p.xi

⁽²⁾History of the Anglo-Saxons. IV.408

⁽³⁾ibid. IV.409-416

though he thought it had strong rhythm and cadence, with "metaphors and perpetual periphrasis". His discussion of the bards and druids, in the first volume ~~was~~ based for the most part, as Turner admitted, on the works of the Welsh literary antiquaries Edward Jones⁽¹⁾, Evan Evans⁽²⁾, Edward Williams⁽⁴⁾, William Owen (Pughe)⁽³⁾, and the account⁽⁵⁾ of the druids by Jacob des Moulins. Turner gave a full account of the legends of King Arthur, making an attempt to separate historical fact from legend. A sentence or two is devoted to describing the contents and estimating the historical importance of each of ten obscure Anglo-Saxon poems, with the prefatory wish expressed that some gentleman might be stimulated to translate them. Over fifty pages were given over to the literary accomplishments of Alfred. In the fourth volume, which is a sort of general receptacle for Turner's miscellaneous afterthoughts, he discussed at some length the Latin literature of the Anglo-Saxons, and vernacular poetry including the fragment of Judith and the Battle of Brunanburgh. Altogether in this volume there were nearly 100 pages devoted to the literature

⁽¹⁾ Musical and Poetical Relicks of the Welsh Bards ... London, 1784

⁽²⁾ The Heroic Elegies and Other Pieces of Llywarch Hen ... London, 1792

⁽³⁾ Some Specimens of the Poetry of the Ancient Welsh Bards, London, 1764

⁽⁴⁾ Poems, Lyric and Pastoral, 2 vols. London, 1794

⁽⁵⁾ Antiqua Restaurata. A Concise Historical Account of the Ancient Druids. London, 1794.

of the period, with a wealth of quotation and translation. A long chapter was given over to the early language, and by quotations from authors from Shakespeare to Gibbon, Turner showed that the root words of modern English were of Saxon origin. After Turner's work, there could be no history of English literature that did not begin with the Anglo-Saxons; and no study of the language which did not recognize that the warp and woof of our speech is Anglo-Saxon in origin.

In the first volume Turner called particular attention to the manuscripts of the old Welsh poets, whose work he used as a source for his history⁽¹⁾. The authenticity of these poems had previously been denied by Pinkerton, the Scottish antiquary, in his edition of Barbour, where he wrote: "those who believe in the riming Welch poetry, ascribed to Taliessin and other bards of the sixth century, may enjoy their own credulity"⁽²⁾. Pinkerton was never graceful when contradicted. The anonymous notice of Turner's first volume in the Critical Review⁽³⁾ handled the work roughly, with unmistakable Pinkertonian insolence. The idea of writing such a history was highly commended, and the reviewer insisted that he was "eager to applaud". The rest of the review was a long condemnation. He ridiculed Turner's

⁽¹⁾History of the Anglo-Saxons. I.84 ff

⁽²⁾Pinkerton: Barbour's Bruce. p.xiii

⁽³⁾Critical Review. January, 1800. pp.12-24

style as a weak copy of Gibbon, and questioned his accuracy on point after point. Particularly did he attack the genuineness of the old Welsh poetry, affirming that rhyme did not exist in British or Scandinavian poetry before the twelfth century, and that that fact, with other evidence, led him "to infer that the pretended remains of the old Welch bards were merely composed in their names by later writers". Pinkerton was most inclusive in his attack. Despite Turner's obvious use of hitherto untranslated Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, Pinkerton denied Turner's knowledge of the language and his reading of the British Museum manuscripts. "... he is even a stranger to the published collections of Anglo-Saxon coins [Pinkerton's own work]; from which he might also have illustrated his argument". And as a final condemnation: "If this, however, be a juvenile performance, as we imagine, we are rather inclined to applaud than condemn; but we must advise the writer to use greater judgement in reading and quoting, to lock up his modern Welch poets, and study, for a course of years, the Anglo-Saxon language, and the numerous manuscripts in which it is used, before he can expect to throw any new light on our early history."

The attacks on his style and general lack of qualification for his task Turner passed without comment, but he was ready to defend the authenticity of his material.

In 1803, two years before the last volume of his History appeared, Turner published his Vindication^(*). He took immediate notice of his accusers by name, beginning his preface: "The genuineness of these poems has been publicly impeached by Mr. Pinkerton in his preface to Barbour, and in a review ... of my Anglo-Saxon History, published in the Critical Review for January 1800. Mr. Malcolm Laing has also attacked them in a note to his Dissertation on Ossian's Poems, and some other gentlemen in private societies have also depreciated them".

For 284 pages Turner argued for the validity of the pieces, and his immediate critics were silenced. The controversy had forced both sides to dig deep into early poetry for weapons for attack. Here again, as often happened in the movement, fruitful research was inspired not only by a desire to add to knowledge, but also to unearth facts to discredit the findings of other scholars. By his defense, as well as by the four volumes of his History, Turner made the reading public of the day conscious of the fact that English literature did not begin with Chaucer, or even with the Romances, but extended back into the misty period before the Conquest.

(*) A Vindication of the Genuineness of the Ancient British Poems of Aneurin, Taliesin, Llywarch, Heu, and Merdhin, with Specimens of their Poems. London, 1803

An example of the popular attitude towards Anglo-Saxon can be seen in Horace Walpole, who, though completely ignorant of the language, could still pass his opinion on it as "the most barbarous and unharmonious ⁽¹⁾ [language] that ever disgraced the human voice". Walpole, the supreme man of taste of his century, dabbled in literary antiquarianism as he would dabble in any ephemeral fad. He wrote to Percy: "I love the cause, I have a passion for antiquity and literary amusements" ⁽²⁾. He had, however, no honest relish or appreciation for early literature, and less knowledge of it. "I am, too, though a Goth, so modern a Goth", he wrote to Mason, "that I hate the black letter, and I love Chaucer better in Dryden and Baskerville than in his own language and dress." ⁽³⁾ He was both puzzled and sad that "Mr. Warton ... contracted such an affection for his materials." ⁽⁴⁾ In a letter defending himself from charges that it was through his neglect that Chatterton died, Walpole complained: "True antiquarians would not take a genius, if they thought it a contemporary. The elegance of Waller, the fire of Dryden, want in some eyes the unintelligible jargon of a barbarous century to make them captivate" ⁽⁵⁾.

¹ William Mitford: An Essay upon the Harmony of Language ... London, 1774. p.165

² Walpole to Percy, Feb.5, 1765. Walpole's Letters. VI.183

³ Walpole to Mason, Nov.3, 1781. Walpole's Letters. XII.12

⁴ Walpole to Mason, Apr.7, 1774. Walpole's Letters. IV.40

⁵ Gentleman's Magazine. April, 1782. p.193.

Walpole's own contribution to literary antiquarianism came before the period we are surveying. In 1758 he published A Catalogue of Royal and Noble Authors of England. With Lists of their Works. His material was culled mostly from Tanner. It was a work that might be welcome for purposes of reference or to cater to geneological pride, but it was hardly calculated to arouse in his contemporaries any desire to ferret out and read these old authors.

In 1772 Walpole's press at Strawberry Hill contributed its mite to the growing number of republications of early works. Miscellaneous Antiquities; or a Collection of Curious Papers: Either republished from Scarce Tracts, or now first printed from the original MSS. To be Continued Occasionally. Strawberry Hill, 1772, comprised only two tracts in all, one of which calls for mention here. The second paper issued was an edition of Sir Thomas Wyat's Defense, after the indictment and evidence, with an introductory life of Sir Thomas Wyat by some unknown antiquary, possibly Samuel Pegge. Walpole was a friend of most of the men of his time engaged in reviving early literature, but he himself was never betrayed into an unseemly enthusiasm for the subject. His interest in antiquarian matters was limited to weapons, architecture, and bric à brac, and it was preferable that they be not too antique.

VI

Chaucer; Early Drama

This story of Chaucer studies in the second half of the eighteenth century is the story of the discovery of Chaucer for the first time since shortly after his death. There was no revival of Chaucer in the strict sense of the word, for the name had never been lost from the tradition of English literature. But to speak of Chaucer to the average cultivated eighteenth century gentleman was to speak of a man far more alien than Homer; a man using a foreign language, less well known than ancient Greek; a man whose poetry obeyed no metric rules, whose name was revered, but whose works were never read. The name of Chaucer commanded a curious but not inexplicable blend of respect and condescension. Sheer antiquity did not lack its meed of reverence in this century, and Chaucer as an ancient poet was accorded all honours for his antiquity - but not for his works. The moss of age had so completely obscured his poetry, indelibly engraved though it was, that the moss was now his only claim to fame. Chaucer's loudest decriers were always willing, too willing, to own him the father of English poetry, the first English versifier to write poetically. But this very willingness to crown him as the great pioneer prevented his works from being read by all but the most scholarly of antiquaries. One is readily awed by a pioneer work of art, but one seldom goes to it solely for pleasure. Add to this the eighteenth

century feeling that early works of literature were necessarily crude and naive, and it is evident that to call Chaucer the father of English poetry was tantamount to saying that his works were unreadable and unworthy of being read. This attitude on the part of cultured readers, even on the part of poets and some scholars, lingered well on to the end of the century.

Had the eighteenth century known Chaucer as we know him he would certainly not have lacked appreciation.^(*) But the one quality associated with his poetry besides age was a bluff coarse humour. There are very few allusions to Chaucer in eighteenth century literature which do not contain some reference to his primitive coarseness. That Chaucer wrote in anything but a back-slapping, rib-nudging vein was wholly unknown to the general public. Even men like Warton, who pointed out that there was much of tenderness and pathos in his poetry, asserted their opinion in a militantly defensive tone, as if expecting to be jeered at. Chaucer was not blamed for his bucolic vulgarity, as that was considered the natural tone of early poetry. This attitude continued to live even in the next century, and it has hardly died out in our own time. Its long life is due perhaps first of all to the fact that a combination of medievalism and elegance seemed paradoxical to the eighteenth century

^(*) See Lounsbury: *Studies in Chaucer*; III, 254, for a discussion of Chaucer's affinities with eighteenth century literary qualities.

mind. Furthermore it must be remembered that the Chaucerian canon at that time included much third rate stuff, and somehow the spurious were always given more prominence than the genuine poems. The so-called imitations of Chaucer which appeared sporadically throughout the century, usually in the periodicals and in collections of fugitive verse, were always anxious to catch the note of authenticity by being vulgar; any other method was studiously avoided, as unbecoming in one who lived in a refined and polished age.

The main bar to eighteenth century appreciation of Chaucer was that nobody read him. Even such a cultured man as Horace Walpole, with a flair for the past, was almost as ignorant of his poetry as was the general public. Once he ventured to quote from Chaucer, but the extract, two lines from such a well known passage as the description of the Host, was, according to Walpole, "as Spenser says"⁽¹⁾. Chaucer's language was considered wholly incomprehensible without a special knowledge of Middle English, and at that time there were very few facilities for even scholars to learn the history of the English language. It is irritating for a modern student to read through the eighteenth century Reviews and literary annals and see how many years of painstaking scholarship were devoted to minute criticism of biblical and classical texts, while the history of native literature and

⁽¹⁾ Letter to Miss Mary and Miss Agnes Berry. Sept. 4, 1789. Letters: ed. Toynbee, XLV. 201.

"A semely man our hoste is withal
To ben a marshal in a lordes hall."

language went almost without commentators. Neither Anglo-Saxon nor Middle English were taught at the Universities, and those who wished to read early and medieval literature in the originals had to depend on antiquated reference books, usually in Latin. Even for those who were prepared to read Chaucer in the original there were difficulties.~~in~~ The current edition, that of Urry, had so distorted ~~the~~ text that a knowledge of Middle English would have been an obstacle in reading it. The lack of interest in the history of English language and literature was such that in 1765 Johnson could say quite truthfully that "...Homer has fewer passages unintelligible than Chaucer".^①

When the language obstacle had been overcome, there still remained the idea that Chaucer was not worth reading. This, like so many of the eighteenth century judgements on early literature, arose primarily from the conception of the history of literature as a constant progress up to the culminating point of its own time. Medieval poetry, written as it was in the dim beginnings of English literature, was not worthy to be read by men familiar with a literature which had reached the utmost in elegance and refinement. With Chaucer there was, in addition, a special difficulty. In spite of the fact that Tyrwhitt's discoveries had been more or less in the air for many years before 1775, and that several men had dimly foreshadowed his work, their half-

① Johnson: The Plays of William Shakespeare. London, 1765. Preface.

hearted assertions that Chaucer really did write poetry made no impression on their readers. The idea that Chaucer was a highly conscious artist, adept at sophisticated metrics, seemed plainly ridiculous to anyone who could count. Was it not evident that Chaucer's lines were irregular in the number of syllables - and certainly from no artistic purpose? Furthermore, how could there be a fine literary artist in a day when there was no literary art? - the vicious circle again. Thus to our picture of the hoary, comic poet, we add another adjective - artless. The whole conception is summed up in a stanza from a poem written in 1772, where it is evident that the writer thought he was being magnanimous:

"Here Chaucer first his comic verse display'd,
And merry tales in homely guise convey'd:
Unpolished beautied grace the artless song
Tho' rude the diction, yet the sense was strong."⁶

In 1761 it was solemnly declared that:

"His tuneless numbers hardly now survive
As ruins of a dark and Gothic age."⁷

At the very end of the century, in 1779, it can hardly be said that Chaucer's reputation had been heightened, even though he was compared to a meteor:

"As amid the gloom of night,
When no star emits its light,
Swift the meteor's sudden ray
Gleams a momentary day;

⁶ The Progress of Poetry. Annual Register, 2nd edition, 1775. Vol. 15, part 2, p. 227. Taken from Spurgeon 1.437.

⁷ Hugh Dalrymple, Woodstock Park. Taken from Lonnbury: Studies, 111.329.

Thus gay Chaucer's mirthful rhymes
Glittered amid barb'rous times."⁽¹⁾

Granted that Chaucer's poetry was unintelligible, unpoetical, and uncouth, it is obvious that those poets, such as Dryden, Pope, and many lesser lights, who translated and modernized him should be given the credit for rescuing the old Bard from complete oblivion. And that credit was not withheld. Dryden in particular was regarded as having conferred an immense favour on Chaucer by refining and versifying his poetry, thus making it fit to be read by modern readers. Not only the general public, but all except the most biased of the antiquarians believed that they enjoyed the modernizations in spite of rather than because of anything Chaucer may have contributed to them. Any other sentiment was ill bred as well as ridiculous. Horace Walpole stood aghast at the immodest enthusiasm Warton had betrayed for Chaucer unclothed: "I am sorry Mr. Warton has contracted such an affection for his materials, that he seems almost to think that not only Pope, but Dryden himself, have added few beauties to Chaucer"⁽²⁾. Again, when Tyrwhitt's work came out: "I have waded through Mr. Tyrwhitt's most tedious notes to the Canterbury Tales, for a true antiquary can still be zealous to settle the genuine shape of a lump of mineral from which Dryden has extracted all the gold, and converted *into beautiful medals*."⁽³⁾

⁽¹⁾ Lady Catherine Rebecca Manners: Review of poetry, ancient and modern, A poem. By Lady Mxxxxxxx. London, 1799. p.17

⁽²⁾ Letter to Mason. April 17, 1774. Letters: ed. Toynbee. Vlll.440

⁽³⁾ Letter to Mason. April, 1775. *ibid.* lX.180

If such an attitude could be taken by a man like Walpole, who had something of a reputation as an antiquary, and who evidently regarded himself as one, it is not difficult to understand the complacent remarks of less enlightened critics. The same gentlemen who thought that Chaucer's tuneless numbers hardly now survived also thought that

"...all his blithesome tales their praise derive
From Pope's immortal song and Prior's page."⁽¹⁾

It is the late date of some of these remarks which is most amazing. Ten years after Tyrwhitt, there appeared⁽²⁾ a work on the history of romances the statement that "Dryden's elegant, rich, and harmonious numbers, have preserved this (the Knight's Tale), and many other of Chaucer's works, from sinking into oblivion, and he has given the old Bard a share of his own immortality."⁽²⁾ Twenty years after Tyrwhitt, in 1795, the reviewer of a collection of modernizations of the Canterbury Tales expressed perfectly the attitude which was just beginning to die out, though it still, in a modified form, had several years to run. The critic says that the translators of Chaucer have not "been content with merely rendering the sense more accessible, and giving harmony to the measure, but being themselves poets, they have improved what they professed only to explain; they have extended the embryo thought, adorned the baldness of their author by adding the pride, pomp, and circumstance of poetical narration,

⁽¹⁾ Dalrymple (?): Woodstock Park.

⁽²⁾ Clara Reeve: Progress of Romance. 1.18

softened the grossness of an uncultivated age, and made their author speak not only the language, but the poetry of modern times."⁶ Praise in this strain sounded sweet to the ears of eighteenth century furbishers of the obsolete poet. What would now be a withering condemnation was then flattering both to the age and to the writer. Certainly no writing earned with more justness the resulting criticism. Only those who have ploughed through the pages of Mr. Ogle, Mr. Betterton, and, above all, Mr. Lipscomb, can appreciate the truth of the critic's praise; only too successfully did they extend the embryo thought, adorn the baldness of their author, and make him speak not only the language, but the poetry of modern times.

By the latter half of the century the pleasures - or the profits - of modernizing Chaucer had begun to lessen. After all, in order to modernize his poetry one had to read the original, and there were few men prepared to tackle such a task, while those who could do it were mostly scholars interested only in the original. Moreover, all the attractive stories had been modernized already - or what the century thought were the attractive stories, for there still remained the tales of the Franklin, Doctor, Pardoner, Shipman, Prioress, Monk, Second Nun, Canon's Yeoman, Manciple, Parson, the Rime of Sir Thopas, and Melibeus, which were unavailable to the

⁶ Critical Review: May, 1795. Vol. 14, p.48.

the eighteenth century audience save in the originals.⁽¹⁾
 Throughout the century little snippets of Chaucerian poetry, imitations rather than modernizations, continued to appear, mostly in the periodicals, but these are of no importance, save to show how little the adjective Chaucerian applied to the poet we know. There were one or two reprints of translations which had appeared earlier in the century,⁽²⁾ mostly separate editions of the versions collected in Ogle's 1741 volume. The Monthly Review for December, 1791,⁽³⁾ had a review of "The Miller's Tale: From Chaucer".⁽⁴⁾ I have not been able to find the book, and it is not mentioned in Hammond. Apparently the translation was anonymous. It may have been another edition of a translation⁽⁵⁾ published under the title

① The Shipman's and Manciple's Tales had apparently been modernized before by a London Bookseller, Andrew Jackson, but the only evidence of this is Nichols (Literary Anecdotes 111.625n-626n), for the book has disappeared. Nichols gives the title of the book as "Matrimonial Scenes; consisting of The Seaman's Tale, the Manciple's Tale, the Character of the Wife of Bath, the Tale of the Wife of Bath, and her Five Husbands - all modernized From Chaucer by A. Jackson, London, 1750.

② Constantia, or the Man of Law's Tale. By Henry Brooke. London, 1778. Cambuscan, or the Squire's Tale of Chaucer, modernized by Mr. Boyse; continued from Spenser's Fairy Queen by Mr. Ogle, and concluded by Mr. Sterling. Dublin, 1785. Gualtherus and Griselda, or Happiness Properly Estimated, a Tale. Angelica's Ladies' Library. London, 1794. pp.73-104. All were reprinted from Ogle's collection.

③ Monthly Review; December, 1791.-p. 456

④ "The Miller's Tale: From Chaucer. 4to. pp.27. Ridgway. 1791."

⑤ Cf. Lounsbury: Studies in Chaucer, 111.188.

of "The Carpenter of Oxford", in 1712, the work of Samuel Cobb, but it is equally possible that it was an entirely new version, for the Miller's Tale has charms. The reviewer of the work was not enthusiastic and thought that "Old Chaucer's transgressions ... are too gross for modern politeness", although, as he pointed out "...his former imitators have taken more care to preserve his jest than to conceal his indelicacy". The general idea of modernizations was approved, for "this old dish must be dressed up to the taste of the present time". Two new modernizations of the Squire's Tale⁽¹⁾ were published, but they are of no importance apart from showing the popularity of the poem. Next to the off-colour stories of Chaucer, the Squire's Tale seems to have been the best known, at least by repute, in the eighteenth century, probably because of the interest of Spenser and Milton in the poem.

Among the literary events of the last half of the century was the first complete translation of the Canterbury Tales into modern English. The Rev. William Lipscomb published the full version in 1795, fifty-four years after Ogle's half completed collection had appeared. Lipscomb reprinted the earlier collection, which in turn had gathered together as far as it went all the modernizations current at the time. The editor himself translated all the remaining

⁽¹⁾ John Penn: in Poems, London, 1794; The Squire's Tale, a fragment from Chaucer. (Spurgeon, p. 495)
Squire's Tale, imitated from Chaucer. Monthly Magazine, supplemental notes to vol.2, pp.987-92. 1796.

⁽²⁾ The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer, Completed in a Modern Version. 3 vols. Oxford, 1795.

stories, except the Miller's and the Reeve's Tales, omitted because he wished to exhibit Chaucer "to a more refined age a safe as well as a brilliant example of native genius"⁽¹⁾. The Parson's Tale was excluded because of its tediousness. In a review of Lipscomb's first attempt at translating Chaucer, a version of the Pardoner's Tale published separately in 1792, the critic had ventured to hope that the author would supply "notes and illustrations, to render this almost obsolete author more familiar to modern readers"⁽²⁾. In the complete version Lipscomb bowed to recent Chaucerian scholarship by including Tyrwhitt's Introductory Discourse on the Canterbury Tales, and by using Tyrwhitt's notes here and there. His excuse for the complete lack of notes or any other manifestations of scholarship of his own was his distance from London and reference books. This could hardly be the reason for the strange mistake he made of saying that he printed Tyrwhitt's Life of Chaucer, when in reality it was the article from the Biographia Britannica.⁽³⁾ It says much for the reviewer's knowledge of Tyrwhitt that Lipscomb's error passed undetected. He seems fated to make unlucky mistakes which always revealed curious ignorance. Ogle's collection had not included Dryden's version of the Nun's Priest's Tale, as that Tale had not been reached in the order the work followed. So Lipscomb translated the Nun's

⁽¹⁾ Preface, p. viii.

⁽²⁾ Gentleman's Magazine, November, 1792. p. 1022

⁽³⁾ Spurgeon. 1.496. Hammond repeats Lipscomb's mistake.

Priest's Tale himself, not discovering Dryden's version until it was too late. His preface contained the usual soothing of the century's susceptibilities: "The following collection ... is offered to the public under the reasonable confidence, that the improved taste in poetry, and the extended cultivation of that ;... which so strongly characterizes the present day, will make the lovers of verse look up to the old Bard, the Father of English poetry, with a veneration proportioned to the improvements they have made in it". His reason for publishing the work was the fact that "the language, in which he [Chaucer] wrote, hath decayed from under him". Even in its decayed state, Chaucer's poetry was never so dead as when it was modernized. The reviewer in the Critical Review highly approved the idea of modernizing Chaucer: "The great father of our English poetry has long spoken a language unintelligible to all common readers; - the Tales of Chaucer have required a translation almost as much as any other classic". The reviewer compared Dryden and Lipscomb, and mildly reproved Lipscomb for his eighteenth century diction, and departures from Chaucerian simplicity.

It is difficult to give representative selections from Lipscomb's work, because no selection is representative; it should be all or nothing. There are no passages flashily

Preface, p.v.
 Critical Review. May, 1795. Vol. 14 (New Series), pp. 43-54.
 ibid, p. 48

bad; the whole thing is just not Chaucer, and shows complete ignorance on the part of the translator as to the literary quality of the original. I give Lipscomb's version of two passages familiar to the reader, one from the description of the cook, the other the description of the poor widow in the Nun's Priest's Tale:

"Great harm it was, (for much it slacked his pace)
A mormal on his shin had taken place;
And, sorely grieved, the blemish I descry'd:
But what his legs refused, his hands supply'd.
Of palate exquisite; of labour free;
A kitchen doctor in the first degree,
The food to cater, or the dish to fill:
Blanc-mange was held his master piece of skill."

"Time's snowy honours sprinkled on her head,
Her peaceful life an aged widow led;
A lofty grove, her humble cot behind,
Fenc'd off the rudeness of the western wind:
In front a limpid stream meand'ring flowed
And breath'd gay health around the neat abode."

At least Lipscomb did not call the widow "this dowager", as Dryden did, and perhaps that is as good an epitaph as any.

It is a relief to turn from the hack writers to the work of scholars. There was little "appreciative" criticism of Chaucer in the eighteenth century; in fact there was very little in any department of literature. Such a lack arose from the century's habit of thought. The eighteenth century critic did not say "I like this and this because ...", but "This is to be liked". The two attitudes breed two entirely different types of criticism, springing from antithetical types of mind. In addition, the century

had no time for literary criticism. All its efforts were needed to build up a foundation of facts; one cannot become enthusiastic over blank space. Unfortunately, literary criticism did not grow side by side with scholarly research. Unfortunately, because Chaucer badly needed the services of an enthusiast of authority, one who would proclaim with passion that Chaucer was more than a crude teller of jokes, who would point out his "beauties" for all to see. No one came forward to take the part, and the nearest to our modern essays on the delights of Chaucer is a number of paragraphs scattered through Thomas Warton's works. As early as 1754, in the first edition of his Observations on the Faerie Queen, he had spoken in defense of Chaucer.¹ In the second edition, published in 1762, these remarks were made more enthusiastic:

"I cannot dismiss this Section without a wish, that this neglected author ... should be more universally studied. This is at least what one might expect in an age of research and curiosity. Chaucer is regarded rather as an old, than as a good poet. We look upon his poems as venerable relics, not as beautiful compositions; as pieces better calculated to gratify the antiquarian than the critic. He abounds not only in strokes of humour, which is commonly supposed to be his sole talent, but of pathos and sublimity, not unworthy of a more refined age. His old manners, his romantic arguments, his wildness of painting, his simplicity and antiquity of expression transport us into some fairy region, and are all highly pleasing to the imagination. (This last sentence was not in the first edition) It is true that his uncouth and unfamiliar language disgusts and deters many readers; but the principal reason for his being so little known, and so seldom taken into hand, is the convenient opportunity of reading him with pleasure and facility in modern imitations".⁽²⁾

¹ Op.Cit. London, 1754. p.141-142

² Op.Cit. second edition. London, 1762. 1.196-197

This paragraph, coming parenthetically at the end of the section of Spenser's imitations from Chaucer, is one of the few bits of eighteenth century criticism which comes near to the "appreciation" which has become a literary type with us. With such preliminary work, one might expect great things for Chaucer in Warton's History of English Poetry, where there is a section of 127 pages devoted to his life and poetry. But the length of the article is misleading, for Warton always liked to parade his learning, and with Chaucer he had a golden opportunity to branch off into detailed discussion of the sources of the tales, a more ornate subject than Chaucer himself. Warton talked much less of the actual poetry than of the sources, and gave less quotation from Chaucer than from obscure poems more or less remotely connected with his work. When, in his discussion of the prologue, Warton reached the Physician, he gave a learned disquisition on the books the Physician is mentioned as having read. All this recondite information was valuable and necessary sometime, but a less showy and more pertinent article on Chaucer himself would have been vastly more useful then. What appreciation there was of Chaucer was delivered in such a patronizing tone as to nullify any radical opinion that might be expressed, though members of the party on the Right, such as Walpole, feared for Warton's

soul. Whenever Warton allowed himself to praise Chaucer, he retrieved his dignity by owning himself surprised. Of the Knight's Tale, he said: "We are surprised to find, in a poet of such antiquity, numbers so nervous and flowing"⁽¹⁾. Again, in his final summing-up of Chaucer, he said: "We are surprised to find, in so gross and ignorant an age, such talents for ~~sabire~~, and for observation on life; qualities which usually exert themselves at more civilized periods"⁽²⁾. Chaucer's faults are because of the times: his "obscenity is in great measure to be imputed to his age ... Men are less ashamed as they are less polished"⁽³⁾; his virtues are in spite of them: "... he appeared with all the lustre and dignity of a true poet, in an age which compelled him to struggle with a barbarous language, and a national want of taste ..." ⁽⁴⁾ Despite his timidity Warton made it clear that there were times when Chaucer was to be preferred to his modernizers: "When I read Pope's elegant imitation of this piece [House of Fame], I think I am walking among the modern monuments unsuitably placed in Westminster-Abbey"⁽⁵⁾.

Although Tyrwhitt's edition of the Canterbury Tales was published the year after Warton's History, it

⁽¹⁾ History of English Poetry. 1.396

⁽²⁾ ibid. 1.435

⁽³⁾ ibid. 1.431

⁽⁴⁾ ibid. 1.457

⁽⁵⁾ ibid. 1.396

⁽⁶⁾ The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer: To which are added, An Essay upon his Language and Versification; an Introductory Discourse; and Notes. 4v. London, 1775. Volume V. Containing a Glossary. London, 1778.

owed nothing to the earlier work, as the critical part of the book, the essay on the language and versification of Chaucer, and the introductory discourse to the Canterbury Tales had been printed before Warton's book came out.

Tyrwhitt's study was the atonement of the eighteenth century to the poet, and it was full atonement. No such step forward in the study of Chaucer has since been made, nor is it ever likely to be made again. Heretofore, a proper valuation of Chaucer had been impossible, even for scholars; after Tyrwhitt, although appreciation both of Chaucer and of Trywhitt's work was slow in coming, it was possible for the general public to read Chaucer originals with as much enjoyment as is possible for the modern reading public. All the raw materials for the highly developed modern industry of Chaucer scholarship were in Tyrwhitt.

It says much for Tyrwhitt's difficulties that he himself, a scrupulously honest man, said that he had been forced to proceed with his edition "as if his author had never been published before"⁽¹⁾. But in reality his task was much harder than his own words imply. It would have been easier to edit a completely unknown poet than to do what Tyrwhitt had to do - sift the truth through the incrustations of four centuries of fable. His study was as valuable for its destructive as for its constructive work. Up to him, every Chaucer editor had added his share to the

⁽¹⁾ Preface. V.1., p.1

canon and the life, for, as Pinkerton said, "... he was lord of the manor of poetry for a long time, and all stray cattle went to him"⁶¹. Even when a work was known through an authoritative source to be the work of some definite poet, if it had been written anywhere near Chaucer's time, it was included in his works for good measure, either as written by Chaucer, or as "illustrating" him. As for the life, all was grist for the biographer of the poet, and the result is seen in the fact that the work of elimination is still going on today. Tyrwhitt did not attempt to write a formal biography of Chaucer, for, as he said, not without irony, he could add little to what had already been done. He called the section "An Abstract of the Historical Passages of the Life of Chaucer", and included nothing which did not have the authority of Chaucer's own words or of official records. That Tyrwhitt took some of his facts from works not now admitted to the canon is of small importance. What does matter is that he rejected the whole mass of apocryphal material gathered loosely about the name of Chaucer, on no authority other than "somebody said". The known facts of the life, when Tyrwhitt had sifted them out, amounted to only a few paragraphs. In the notes he took up one by one the stories included in the current biographies, and

⁶¹Pinkerton: Ancient Scottish Poems. p. 482.

showed on what flimsy evidence they rested. Despite the lack of facilities for research in Tyrwhitt's day, and despite the years of patient investigation of the subject since his time, very little has been added to his knowledge of Chaucer's life other than a few sentences beginning "It is very likely that ..."

Tyrwhitt's work on the canon was just as thorough and ruthless. Although his book was an edition of the Canterbury Tales only, much of his criticism applies to all the works. The fifth volume, containing the glossary, included "An Account of the Works of Chaucer, to which this Glossary is adapted; and of those other Pieces which have been improperly intermixed with his in the Editions". In this essay, Tyrwhitt, the first editor not to add to the canon, rejected a large mass of spurious works.⁽⁶⁾ He did not complete the task; several pieces he included are not now accepted, but nothing he rejected has since been taken back permanently. It was easy to pick out the pieces which were known to ^{be} by poets other than Chaucer, but for the mass of anonymous material which had drifted into the fold, Tyrwhitt's only criterion other than the lists of Chaucer and Lydgate, was his own knowledge of Chaucer's style - not the mathematical knowledge of modern scholarship, but the knowledge of a lover of ^{the} poetry. It was by the same method that he established his text, the first good text of the Canterbury Tales in modern times. He used twenty-

⁽⁶⁾ For an analysis of Tyrwhitt's rejections, see Hammond. p.66-7.

five MSS., but followed no single one consistently, choosing his readings as his literary judgement dictated. The result, of course, was not the modern ideal of critical texts, but it was a much greater advance over the work of previous editors than any modern or future text can be over Tyrwhitt's. The edition of Chaucer which was current in the eighteenth century was that of Urry, of which Tyrwhitt said, "Mr. Urry's edition should never be opened by anyone for the purpose of reading Chaucer".⁽¹⁾ Urry, with some vague idea that Chaucer had written his poetry with a knowledge of the laws of metre, had determined to make his text obey those laws. He therefore added or took away words and changed spellings whenever he found a line which seemed too long or too short - a procedure which by no means convinced those who doubted that Chaucer wrote poetry.⁽²⁾ Tyrwhitt, with his text based on MS. sources and on Caxton's editions, uncovered a new poet, when he removed the textual ministrations of previous editors.

Invaluable as was Tyrwhitt's work on the text, canon, and life of Chaucer, he is best known for his services to

⁽¹⁾ Op. Cit. V.vi.

⁽²⁾ Richard Farmer was not convinced. In the second edition of his Essay on the Learning of Shakespeare, published in

1767, there appeared this note: "Let me make here an observation for the benefit of the next editor of Chaucer, Mr. Urry, probably misled by his predecessor, Speght, was determined, Procustus-like to force every line in the

Canterbury Tales to the same Standard: but a precise number of Syllables was not the Object of our old Poets".

(Essay on the Learning of Shakespeare, 3rd edition, 1789. p.40n)

Chaucer as an artist in language and metre. His Essay on the Language and Versification of Chaucer, based as it ~~was~~ on a necessarily imperfect knowledge of Middle English and Old English, nevertheless settled once and for all the various linguistic and metric sins laid at the poet's door. It was an accepted fact that Chaucer was responsible for the importation of French words into the English language. He was sometimes blamed for this, as adulterating the language, sometimes praised, as adding foreign elegance to native English, but the fact was never questioned. No one rose to point out the ridiculousness of the idea that a man could depart from native tradition and, single-handed, create a hybrid language that would supplant the original stock. Tyrwhitt, with an impressive amount of proof, showed that Chaucer merely used the language of his times, and that French was widely used in England before and during the last half of the fourteenth century - apparently a new idea to many eighteenth century scholars.

Through his discussion of Chaucer's language Tyrwhitt was the first to prove that the Canterbury Tales were poems and not mangled prose. The idea that Chaucer's verse could be made to scan with the aid of a little knowledge of the language and pronunciation of his time had been more or less dimly adumbrated by several men before Tyrwhitt. Urry and Morell, and even so early an editor as Speght, vaguely realized the fact that Chaucer had not written the

lines as they read them. Johnson, in his grammar of the English language prefixed to his dictionary, stumbled near the secret, when in speaking of the mute e he said: "... which e probably had the force of the French e feminine, and constituted a syllable with its associated consonant. ... This e was perhaps for a time vocal or silent, as convenience required ...", but he did not apply the theory to Chaucer. Thomas Gray also seems to have believed that it was not Chaucer who had mismetred his lines as the eighteenth century knew them. In his Metrum, the rough sketch of a part of his proposed history of English poetry, he returned several times to the idea. He thought much of the roughness of early poetry was due to the faults in transcribing: "I cannot help thinking it probable, that many of the great inequalities of the metre are owing to the neglect of the transcribers"⁽¹⁾. Of Lydgate and his contemporaries he said: "I am inclined to think, (whatever Mr. Dryden says in the preface to his Tales) that their metre, at least in serious measures and heroic stanzas, was uniform; not indeed to the eye, but to the ear, when rightly pronounced. We undoubtedly destroy a great part of the music of their versification by laying the accent of words, where nobody then laid it ..."⁽²⁾ Gray's words, of

⁽¹⁾ The Works of Gray. ed. Gosse. London, 1884. 1.325

⁽²⁾ *ibid.* 1.393n

course, had no influence, as they were not published until the next century, but even had they been published earlier they would have done no good, written as they were, as timid theories, with no proof. Warton, in his History, ignored his opportunities on this score, and sidestepped the question completely. Although the idea was in the air and had often been loosely or timidly expressed, no one had come forward to say it with emphasis, backed by a complete body of proof, until Tyrwhitt's essay on Chaucer's language and versification. Here for the first time were laid before the public the reasons for thinking that Chaucer's lines were not so irregular as they seemed to eighteenth century ears. By as thorough an analysis of Chaucer's language as was possible at the time, he was able to make it clear that inflectional endings, particularly the feminine e were pronounced as separate syllables. Another point he emphasized was that the accent in Middle English differed from that of modern English, and that words originally French were accented as they were in French, and not as in modern English.

Tyrwhitt's knowledge of Old and Middle English was not that of a modern scholar, but his closely reasoned arguments, based on the grounds that Middle English was descended from Old English, were convincing as no other argument could be. By showing that the feminine e was the descendant of much stronger syllables, such as a or en, which were certainly pronounced, he gave a logical reason for its

pronunciation as a separate syllable in Middle English poetry, rather than followed the usual train of argument - the metre of Chaucer's demands that the feminine e be valued as a separate syllable; therefore it should be pronounced so.

Tyrwhitt's services to Chaucer did not stop here. In 1775, when the first four volumes came out, he announced in the preface that he had at one time planned to include a glossary of the Canterbury Tales but had abandoned the idea when it became apparent that a glossary to the Canterbury Tales alone would necessitate too much work in proportion to its value. Subsequently, in 1778, a separate volume was published, containing a glossary of all the works of Chaucer. This glossary is the most permanently valuable part of the edition, though other parts of the work were more useful at the time. At the end of the glossary, following Hailes' example set in Ancient Scottish Poems, Tyrwhitt appended a list of fifty-seven "Words and Phrases not Understood". The "Account of the Works of Chaucer", printed as a preface to the glossary had been discussed above. One other section of the work must be mentioned. In his "Introductory Discourse to the Canterbury Tales" Tyrwhitt did much the same as Warton had done in his History. The essay is a discussion of Chaucer's sources for the tales, but it is a much better piece of work than Warton's, as

Tyrwhitt never forgot that he was talking about Chaucer. With his knowledge of classical as well as medieval and modern literature, he was able to find many sources and analogues, but it is inevitable that in a subject which is not yet exhausted, he could not say the last word. Nevertheless, much of his work on the sources has not yet been superseded by other editors.

The reviews of Tyrwhitt's work by no means indicated that a great work of scholarship had just been published. They were all perfunctory and non-committal notices, with the critics obviously uncomfortable in the task of judging the work. The London Magazine⁽¹⁾ had a short 100 word review, and said merely that Tyrwhitt was "well acquainted with his subject" and that he had asserted that Chaucer "was not ignorant of the laws of metre". The Monthly Review⁽²⁾ had one and one-half pages, one page of which was devoted to quotation from Tyrwhitt's introductory essay. The work was beyond the depth of the reviewer, who was apparently at a loss for standards by which to judge it. The edition was "executed with greater fidelity" than was Urry's, and "those who are fond of enquiries into this period of antiquity will meet with abundance of entertainment and information". The Critical Review⁽³⁾ had a larger

⁽¹⁾London Magazine. December, 1775. v. 44, p.652-3

⁽²⁾Monthly Review. July, 1775. p. 26-7

⁽³⁾Critical Review. September, 1775. pp. 205-07

notice, still mostly quotation from Tyrwhitt. All the reviewers were impressed with the editor's remarks on the pronunciation of Chaucer's language, and most of their quotations were from that section. None of the notices said anything on their own authority, all being content with quoting Tyrwhitt with mild praise. The Gentleman's Magazine apparently ignored the work altogether.

In addition to the authorized second edition^(a) the text and notes of Tyrwhitt's edition were reprinted twice in the century by other editors. Bell's collection of English poets used Tyrwhitt's text for the Canterbury Tales, and Urry's text for the rest of Chaucer's poetry. The free use of his text drove Tyrwhitt to protest in a letter to the Gentleman's Magazine.^(a) He complained that several errors he had pointed out were left unamended and others blunderingly corrected, while for the greater part of the poems Bell had used Urry's text, in which "there is scarcely a line as the author wrote it". Tyrwhitt wished to make it clear that he was in no way associated with "this republication of my book", and emphasized the fact that "the whole transaction has passed without my consent, approbation, and knowledge". The other reprint of Tyrwhitt's text was that of Robert Anderson, in his Works of the British Poets, published in 1792-95. This was

^(a) In two volumes. Oxford, 1798. (With a few of Tyrwhitt's corrections)

^(a) Gentleman's Magazine. June, 1783. p. 461

again a combination of Tyrwhitt for the Canterbury Tales and Urry for the miscellaneous pieces, with some alteration, mostly in the inclusion of apocryphal pieces. Anderson reprinted Tyrwhitt's glossary and included four pieces omitted by Tyrwhitt: The Plowman's Tale, Tale of Gamelyn, Adventures of Pardoner and Tapester, and the Merchant's second tale, although the ^vforword to the poems admitted that the evidence was against the pieces being Chaucerian. Pieces "which are known to be the production of other authors, and the anonymous compositions, which from time to time, have been added to Chaucer's, in the several editions, without any evidence whatever"⁽¹⁾ were omitted from this edition though printed in Urry's. Despite these exclusions there were thirty-six non-Chaucerian pieces in the collection.⁽²⁾ Tyrwhitt's exclusion had been too thorough for his time, and it took several decades to make permanent the contributions of his research.

One little book on Chaucer remains to be mentioned. This was a sort of prospectus⁽³⁾ for an edition of Troilus and Criseyde with the commentary of Sir Francis Kinaston, an early seventeenth^h century scholar. Francis Godolphin Waldron, editor of the Literary Museum, who at that time

(1) Op.Cit. p.vi

(2) For further information on the collections of Bell and Anderson see p.376 ff.

(3) The Loves of Troilus and Creseid, Written by Chaucer, With a Commentary, by Sir Francis Kinaston. Never Before Published. London, 1796.

Owned the MS. of Kinaston's work, now lost, edited the book, the completion of which, he thought would form "no improper supplement" to Tyrwhitt. The book contained "Introductory Extracts" by Waldron, four pages of the text of Troilus and Creseid, and twelve pages of commentary, fifty-two pages in all. Apparently Waldron received no encouragement, for the rest of the work was never issued.

Two men, and perhaps more, had sometime in the century the dream of editing Chaucer. In the list of works projected by Johnson there appears sandwiched in between "New edition of Fairfax's Translation of Tasso" and "Aristotle's Rhetoric, a translation of it into English", the interesting note: "Chaucer, a new edition of him, from manuscripts and old editions, with various readings, conjectures, remarks on his language and the changes it had gone from the earliest times to his age, and from his to the present. With notes explanatory of customs, etc. and references to Boccace and other authors from whom he has borrowed, with an account of the liberties he has taken in telling the stories, his life, and an exact etymological glossary". To judge from Johnson's remarks on Chaucer on other occasions he had no great love for the poet, and

① Sir John Hawkins: Life of Samuel Johnson, London, 1787. p.81

② "The works of Chaucer ... require little criticism. The tale of The Cock seems hardly worth revival; and the story of Palamon and Arcite, containing an action unsuitable to the times in which it was placed, can hardly be suffered to pass without censure of the hyperbolical commendation which Dryden has given it ... " Lives of the Poets. edited by G.B.Hill, 1905. 1.455

owned the MS. of Kinaston's work, now lost, entitled

it is probable that had he ever edited Chaucer the result would not have fulfilled his ambitious plans. The other prospective editor of Chaucer was John Pinkerton, who wrote to Nichols trying to interest him in the project: " I hope ... success ^{would} attend the Select Works of Geoffrey Chaucer; and submit this that you may consider it worth your while to try. Lose you cannot in my opinion, for every purchaser of Johnson's Poets would buy the book to complete their sets..."⁶ It was probably as well for Chaucer that Nichols did not take Pinkerton's bait.

Although it is almost impossible to over-estimate the intrinsic value of Tyrwhitt's work, the effect of his edition of the Canterbury Tales has been vastly over-rated. The reputation of Chaucer has been pictured as a mushroom, growing to its full proportions over-night, as soon as Tyrwhitt's study was published. The truth is that the work was received apathetically by the general public, and even by the learned stratum. It took several decades for Tyrwhitt's discoveries to percolate throughout the educated reading public, as a study of nineteenth century quotations in Miss Spurgeon's Five Centuries of Chaucer Criticism shows. At the end of the eighteenth century we get enthusiastic praise of Tyrwhitt's work side by side with the bland ignoring of his arguments.

⁶ Pinkerton to John Nichols. Oct. 3, 1783. Nichols: Illustrations. V. 674

Beyond the editors who stole Tyrwhitt's work for their own publications, and antiquaries like Ritson and Ellis, few seem to have had a knowledge of Tyrwhitt's findings. Particularly did the idea that Chaucer's poetry was metrically rough and unpolished die a lingering death. In a discussion of the Chatterton-Rowley poems in 1777, two years after Tyrwhitt's *Canterbury Tales*, the critic for the Gentleman's Magazine^(c) thought it suspicious that the poems contained so much ~~pure~~ poetry and harmony because "with all their merit, all our other old bards, from Chaucer down to Donne, are in that particular so defective, that many of their verses are mere prose, and others hardly legible". In the biographical dictionary of John Berkenhout, by no means a strictly Augustan critic, the same idea was expressed in the same year: "(Chaucer's) poems in general possess every kind of excellence, even to a modern reader, ~~dave~~ melody and accuracy of measure; defects which are to be attributed to the imperfect state of our language, and the infancy of the art in this kingdom, at the time when he wrote"^(a). We have seen that there was little or no abatement at the end of the century in the preference for modernizations as compared with the originals.

Despite the great advance in Chaucer scholarship in the latter half of the eighteenth century, the ^{poet} advanced

(c) *Gentleman's Magazine*. June, 1777. p.277

(a) *Op.Cit.* p.312

little if at all in the hearts and esteem of his countrymen. The writings of Chaucer were no more widely known at the end than at the middle of the century, though much more was known of them. The discrepancy between the great advance in scholarship and the standstill in general knowledge and popularity is due to the fact that there were no works of "appreciative" criticism. Before the man in the street could enjoy the qualities of Chaucer, he had to be shown them. After Tyrwhitt's edition of the Canterbury Tales, with the glossary, was published, it was no longer difficult for anyone to read Chaucer without special training, but there was no incentive while the popular opinion of Chaucer remained as it was. In Chaucer, as in so many departments of learning, it was enough for the eighteenth century to do the spade work, the laborious turning up of facts; to the nineteenth century fell the much easier and more spectacular task of translating the findings of the earlier century into popular terms through literary criticism and the appreciative essay.

little if at all in the hearts and

essay.

Eighteenth century studies in the history of the early drama moved on lines exactly parallel with the revival of early poetry. There was the same neglect of original texts, the same lack of historical perspective, the same deprecatory remarks on the part of the editors, and the same evolution of editorial standards. Interest in the early history of the drama was an academic affair, and it was as literature and not as living drama, that the pre-Shakespearian plays were revived. The later Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, which lies outside our scope, stood less in need of the artificial restoration of scholars. The contemporary theatre would probably, in its own time, and of its own accord, have turned back to the Elizabethans for new life,^① but without the auxiliary academic movement the origins of the drama would have received scant attention. Nevertheless, the fact that the revival of early drama was a natural offshoot of the larger movement, and the appearance of such familiar names as Percy and Warton in the roll of historians of the drama, must not obscure the part the contemporary theatre itself took in the movement. Among the men who were drawn into the

① See list of eighteenth century pilferings from Elizabethans in Allardyce Nicoll: A History of Late Eighteenth Century Drama 1750-1800. Cambridge, 1927. p.112-13

network of literary antiquarianism, either as collectors, editors, or helpers, were playwrights and actors.

As in the general movement, there were two tasks for the restorers of early drama. One was to publish texts of old plays so that they were easily available to scholars and to the general public; the other was to trace the early history of the drama in a connected narrative and at some length. Both these tasks were accomplished, though imperfectly, before the last decade of the century, with less help from previous centuries than was the case even with early poetry. The antiquarian movement in drama began twenty years before the corresponding movement in poetry, and to begin with the work that corresponds to the Reliques it is necessary to go back to 1744. In A Select Collection of Old Plays, published in 1744, Robert Dodsley, a playwright himself, though better known as a publisher, did for early plays what Percy had done for poetry: he published texts, and, with them, provided an explanatory essay. Like the Reliques, Dodsley's Old Plays was intended for neither the scholar nor the man in the street, but had something for both. It was the first collection of its kind, and almost the first

book in modern times to give texts of pre-Shakespearian pieces.^(c)

Dodsley's appeal for subscribers, which appeared in the London Evening Post for March 24-26, 1743, gave the reason for the collection:

"As all our Old Plays, except Shakespeare's, Johnson's and Beaumont and Fletcher's, are become exceedingly scarce and extravagantly dear, I propose, if I can procure 200 Subscribers, to select from such of our Dramatic Writers, as are of any considerable Repute, about Forty or Fifty Plays."^(e)

The preface reiterated the same idea: "My first End was to snatch some of the best Pieces of our old Dramatic Writers from total Neglect and Oblivion: As Things not only of mere Curiosity but of Use, as far as elegant entertainment can be of Use." The last part of this sentence, incidentally,

^(c) Some material on Miracle plays appeared in the numerous local histories which were published early in the century. Henry Bourne's History of Newcastle (Newcastle, 1736) had included the text of a Newcastle miracle, Noah's Ark; or, The Shipwright's ancient Play, or Dirge (p.139-41). This text was reprinted, together with "particulars concerning the Corpus Christi plays, or miracle plays, anciently performed by the trading companies of Newcastle upon Tyne", in John Brand, History of Newcastle, 1789 (vol.II, p.369-379). Francis Drake in Eboracum: or, The history and antiquities of the city of York, 1736, gave some valuable particulars of the York plays, taken from the city register, the order of the pageants, extracts from orders for the regulation of plays, and a proclamation concerning them (Appendix p.xxix-xxx1). Particulars regarding these plays were given not as having any literary interest, but as illustrating local history. The information seems to have been ignored by dramatic historians later in the century. Another early text reprinted about this time was Bale's A Breife Comedy or Enterlude of Johan Baptyste's preaching in the wilderness which was printed in the Harleian Miscellany, 1744, vol.1, p.97.

^(e) Straus: Robert Dodsley, p.63

shows Dodsley to be more courageous and honest than most editors of early literature in his time. Apparently Dodsley's business experience as a bookseller and publisher stood him in good stead, for he procured the desired number of subscriptions in a week, and the twelve volumes of the collection duly appeared in 1744. The sources of the text were the 700 plays of the Harleian collection, which were in Dodsley's possession at that time, and the library of Sir Clement Cotterel Dormer, to whom the work was dedicated. All the early plays came from the Harleian collection. Of the twelve volumes, the first volume and half the second contained pre-Shakespearian pieces, ten in all. These were: God's Promises, New Custom, The Four P's, Gammer Gurton's Needle, The Pinner of Wakefield, Damon and Pithias, Gorboduc⁽¹⁾, Campaspe, The Spanish Tragedy, and Edward II. Altogether there were 51 plays, none by Shakespeare, one of Marlow, but five of Massinger's.

Dodsley was not only the first to publish such a collection, but he was almost the first to give a connected account of any length of the early history of the

⁽¹⁾ This had been published before in 1736, with a preface by Joseph Spence, the antiquary.

⁽⁹⁾ drama. The first volume of Old Plays contained a history of the drama of Europe to the closing of the theatres. The material for the sections on countries other than England were taken almost word for word from Riccoboni, with nothing added. The section on the English drama used all the early material in Riccoboni, but gave some additional matter, taken from FitzStephen, Stow, Puttenham's Art of Poetry, statutes, acts of parliament, and Carew's Survey of Cornwall. Riccoboni had quoted an Act of Edward III as the earliest evidence of native drama in England, but with the aid of FitzStephen, Dodsley was able to date the first mention before the conquest. Despite the additions, there was very little on the beginnings of the drama, because, Dodsley said, there was no more material. Of the Mysteries and Moralities, he said: "...a more particular knowledge of these things ... was so little worth preserving, that the loss of it is scarce to be regretted." Volume eleven contained an essay in the form

(re-issued in 1754)

- ⑥ In 1741, Luigi Riccoboni's An Historiical and Critical Account of the Theatres in Europe was published in an English translation from the Italian. The history which it gave of the continental theatres was useful, but the chapter on the history of English drama was poor, although it must be remembered that there was no English work to serve as a basis. Riccoboni was forced to go to Stow's Survey of London and Holinshed for the few anecdotes he gave ~~he gave~~ of the origins of early drama. The only play he mentioned specifically was Gorboduc. He was very ingenious, at least; witness his attempt to explain the popularity of blood and thunder tragedy in England by the fact that the English were always "plunged in Contemplation" and therefore tragedies of a more refined taste would cause the audience to fall asleep. Poor as it was, Riccoboni's was the only connected account of early English drama which the first historians had, and even Percy drew on it. Dodsley was one of the publishers of the English translation. Quite possibly it was his association with Riccoboni's work that first drew his attention to the neglected early drama.

of a dialogue on the beginnings of the drama, which Dodsley gave without comment. Isaac Reed, in the second edition, said that the essay had been first published in 1699 and was probably by James Wright. There was an introduction to each play giving bibliographical notes and an account of the author, if he was known. The lives were taken from Winstanley, Phillips, Anthony à Wood, and the Biographia Britannica.

Dodsley's edition leaves much to be desired, but much can be forgiven one who was "the first adventurer on these discoveries", as he called himself. He himself animadverted on the work of the early editors, whose texts he had to use: "One would almost suspect that there was as much malice as stupidity in these old editors"⁽¹⁾, a suspicion which might be held against many an editor coming after Dodsley. Where a passage was unintelligible to Dodsley, he attributed it to the machinations of earlier editors, and mended the passage "by the assistance of a little common sense". For the text of the plays he took whatever copy he happened to come across. The plays in the first volume were printed in their original spelling "to show the progress and improvement of our taste and language", but of the others he said, "I have tried to make the reading as easy as I could."⁽²⁾

⁽¹⁾Vol.1, p.xxxvii

⁽²⁾Vol.1, p.xxxvi

A comparison of the first edition of Old Plays, published in 1744, with the second edition, published in 1780⁶⁾, shows the passing of a literary age in the intervening years. The change in actual contents was small: a few plays were omitted, all late pieces, and a few substituted, among them two pre-Shakespearian pieces, Chichevache and Bycorne, the semi-dramatic dialogue of Lydgate, and the first part of Jeronymo. The history of the stage was continued to 1776, and additional notes, embodying all that had been discovered on the subject since the first edition, were added. The arrangement differed a little: the plays in the second edition were arranged chronologically according to when they were first printed, instead of according to the editor's guess. The change which is important in literary history was the change in editorial standards. As Isaac Reed, editor of the second edition, said, "When Mr. Dodsley undertook the present publication, the duties of an editor of English works were not so well understood as they have been since. The collation of old copies had not at that time been practised in any case that the editor is informed of ... and a knowledge of the writings of contemporary

⁶⁾ A Select Collection of Old Plays. In Twelve Volumes. The Second Edition, Corrected and Collated with the Old Copies, With Notes Critical and Explanatory. London, 1780. 12 vols.
(This edition edited by Isaac Reed)

authors was still less deemed necessary."⁽¹⁾ In the second edition the texts were collated, with the sources of the text given at the end of each play. Dodsley's common-sense interpolations were "silently removed". Reed's observations on the subject of textual emendations shows how far the scholarly world had moved in thirty-six years, though his views must not be taken as universal opinion. He said:

"In printing the text, the Editor ... hath scarcely ever indulged himself in alterations from conjecture. The many experiments of this kind ... and the futility of them all, as hath appeared from the enquiries of later commentators, hath sufficiently convinced him, that such a mode of getting rid of difficulties which occur in ancient writers, is more calculated to show the boldness of the critic, than to give credit to his knowledge, either of the authors, or the habits, fashions, humours, or customs, of former times. He hath, therefore, in not more than two or three instances, departed from the text, and never without noting the variation, that no one who may chuse the rejected words, or is able to explain them to his satisfaction, may be obliged to quit the old copies, if they shall be deemed entitled to a preference."⁽²⁾

The practice of studying contemporary literature for the elucidation of obscure passages in early literature, followed by Warton in his Observations on the Faerie Queen, and by the Shakespearian editors, was used by Reed in editing this edition. In no other instance can we get such a vivid portrayal of the difference between the old order ~~and~~ the new,

⁽¹⁾ Old Plays. 2nd edition. I.xvii

⁽²⁾ Ibid. I.xviii-xix

Despite Dodsley's additions to the stock of knowledge on the history of early English drama, William Rufus Chetwood's A General History of the Stage,⁽¹⁾ published five years later, contained the plot of Gammer Gurton's Needle⁽²⁾ as the only point of interest in English drama up to Shakespeare. The next year Chetwood published A Select Collection of Old Plays⁽³⁾ on the style of Dodsley's collection, but without the earlier editor's historical information. As may be seen from the title, there were no pre-Shakespearian plays.

In 1761 George Colman the Elder, a successful and prolific dramatist as well as a scholar, wrote a plea⁽⁴⁾ for "the old English dramatic writers" as opposed to the French drama. As Colman limited his defense to late Elizabethan drama, the essay does not concern us here, save as an interesting piece of criticism in connection with the general revival of early English literature. In the first place, Colman thought it necessary to prove that there really was

⁽¹⁾ Chetwood: A General History of the Stage. London, 1749

⁽²⁾ *ibid.* p.12 ~

⁽³⁾ Chetwood: A Select Collection of Old Plays Viz^t. I. St. Patrick for Ireland. II. Faire Em, the Miller's Daughter &c. III. The Love Sick King &c. IV. Blurt Master Constable. V. Actaeon and Diana. VI. Salmacida Spoila. With an account of the Authors by the Editor, W.R.Chetwood. Dublin, 1750

⁽⁴⁾ Critical Reflections On The Old English Dramatic Writers; Intended as a preface to the works of Massinger. Addressed to David Garrick, Esq. London, 1761

such a thing as an old English dramatist, for "Shakespeare and Milton seem to stand alone, like first rate Authors, amid the general Wreck of old English Literature". It is illuminating to read the objections - which Colman admitted were reasonable - which were advanced against all except contemporary drama. It was objected that

"the Fable, instead of being raised on probable Incidents in real Life, is generally built on some foreign Novel, and attended with romantick Circumstances; that the Conduct of these extravagant Stories is frequently uncouth, and infinitely offensive to that dramattick Correctness prescribed by late Criticks, and practised, as they pretend, by the French Writers; and that the Characters, exhibited in our old Plays, can have no pleasing Effect on a modern Audience, as they are so totally different from the manners of the present Age."

This was merely another facet in the general objection to all early literature - that it was not modern literature. Colman struck out bravely in defense, but it is amazing to the modern reader that such things ever needed to be said: "Dramatic Nature is of a more large and liberal Quality than they [the critics] are willing to allow. It does not consist merely in the Representation of Real Characters ... but may be extended also to the Exhibition of imaginary Beings. To Create, is to be a Poet indeed ..."

The Companion to the Playhouse,⁶ by David Erskine Baker, a catalogue of dramatists arranged alphabetically

⁶The Companion to the Playhouse: Or, An Historical Account of all the Dramatic Writers (and their Works) that have appeared in Great Britain and Ireland, from the Commencement of our Theatrical Exhibitions, down to the Present Year 1764. 2 vols. London, 1764

and published in 1764, contained a little material pertaining to early drama, though there was no advance in information over Dodsley. The Introduction gave A Brief View of the Rise and Progress of the English Stage, where the progress was traced through Interlude, Mystery, Morality, Gammer Gurton's Needle, Richard Edwards, and Gorboduc. Colman's Critical Reflections was also included. Another edition under the title, Biographia Dramatica, Or, A Companion to the Playhouse, was edited by Isaac Reed in 1782. The whole work was much enlarged, particularly the introductory essay, which was now made a very useful and learned discussion of the history of the drama.

Also in 1764 appeared John Bowle's Miscellaneous Pieces of Antiant Poesie, an example of the eighteenth century habit of printing in one volume an assembly of completely unrelated material. The fact that they were written any time before 1700 was considered excuse enough to link together any heterogeneous group of works. Bowle's collection contained a play, The Troublesome Raigne of King John, and a group of Marston's Satires, with no attempt to justify their association in one volume. The excuse for the book is the play, which, says the title, was "Written by Shakespeare Extant in no Edition of his Writings". Bowle's proof that the play is Shakespeare's seems to consist of the fact that he

is sure that it is. The Book's only value is that it made another early play available to the public and to students of Shakespeare's sources, but even this virtue was soon lost, as better editions of The Troublesome Raigne were published.

The Shakespearian scholars of the day were responsible, both deliberately and unconsciously, for the resurrection of a great deal of pre-Shakespearian drama as well as for much of the study of early drama. The uncertainty in regard to the Shakespeare canon led to the publishing of many early plays⁽¹⁾ which we may take as grist for our study - somewhat unfairly, it must be owned, as they were published as Shakespeare's. Among the many Shakespearian works published at this time was an edition of Twenty of the Plays of Shakespeare, Being the Whole Number printed in Quarto During his Life-Time, or before the Restoration ...⁽²⁾, edited by George Steevens in 1766. This contained texts of the first and second parts of The Troublesome Raigne of King John, The Contention of The Two famous Houses of Lancaster and York, and The True Chronicle historie of King Leir and his Three Daughters. Steevens gave no critical notes nor introduction, save a few bibliographical remarks on each play.

⁽¹⁾ Cf. Capell's inclusion of Edward the Third in Prolusions.

⁽²⁾ Twenty of the Plays of Shakespeare, Being the Whole Number printed in Quarto During his Life-time, or before the Restoration, Collated where there were different Copies, and published from the Originals by George Steevens.
4 vols. London, 1766

Among the dissertations published in Percy's Reliques was one On the Origin of the English Stage &c.^⑤ It was dragged in by the heels, being prefaced to the ballads illustrating Shakespeare, but Percy was wise enough to see that such an essay would be a valuable addition to his work. Percy used the accounts of Warburton,^⑥ Riccoboni, and Dodsley, but he included a great deal of new material beyond a combination of these three, and his essay was frequently used by later scholars even after more exhaustive accounts had been written. For the new information he drew heavily on that invaluable mine, the Harleian collection, then in the possession of Garrick, from which, together with his own copies, he was able to give descriptions of Everyman, Hick-Scorner, The Four Elements, and Lusty Juventus, all new to the general public. He pointed out that in the sixteenth century, Histories were considered in a separate category from Comedies and Tragedies, and that consequently Shakespeare's Histories should not be judged according to the rules of Comedy or Tragedy, as they were at the time. The essay ended with a short paragraph on the theatres themselves, but very little was known on this subject

⑤ Reliques. 1st edition, 1765. I.118-30

⑥ Warburton had printed in his edition of Shakespeare published in 1747, a six page essay on Mysteries and Moralities.
(V.338ff.)

until years later. Percy's was the fullest account of early drama in England up to that time, and continued to be so until Warton's History of English Poetry, nine years later. In subsequent editions of the Reliques Percy added new information, keeping abreast of recent discoveries. The largest number of additions was made in the fourth edition, published in 1794, where the section on the stage and theatre, as distinct from the drama, was much enlarged. The essay had, of course, as many editions as the Reliques itself, as well as being published in a separate edition of the dissertations in 1767⁽¹⁾. There was an edition of the essay published alone in 1793⁽²⁾. Thus, for many years Percy's work was the most widespread and easily available of all the works on the early history of the drama, and its influence can be readily understood.

So far, Dodsley's collection was the only work devoted solely to publishing old plays, other than Steevens' Shakespearian Quartos. In 1773 there appeared another important collection, which formed a valuable supplement to Dodsley. Thomas Hawkin's three volume collection, The Origin of the

⁽¹⁾ Four Essays, As Improved and Enlarged In the Second Edition of the Reliques of Ancient English Poetry. (London) 1767

⁽²⁾ An Essay on the origin of the English Stage, particularly on the historical plays of Shakespeare. n.p., 1793. (Reprinted from the Reliques, 1767, with a few enlargements and alterations).

⁽¹⁾
English Drama ... is largely devoted to pre-Shakespearian pieces. On April 10, 1771, Garrick wrote to Warton⁽²⁾, apparently in reply to a request that Hawkins be allowed access to the Harleian plays. Garrick was willing that Hawkins take what he wanted, but it is plain that he thought that another collection in addition to Dodsley's would be superfluous, though he admitted that Dodsley's was full of errors. In a postscript Garrick asked Warton: "Does not Mr. Hawkins think that the old plays are in general more matters of curiosity than merit?" Hawkins was not deterred, and the collection was published in 1773. Like so many of the works on early English drama, this edition grew out of the study of Shakespeare. Although research in Shakespeare had not reached the point of minute study of his sources, there was room for an anthology of early plays if The Name was invoked in the introduction, even if the plays had nothing specific in connection with Shakespeare. Hawkins had been drawn to the study of the rise of English drama through his work on a new edition of Hanmer's Shakespeare, and he says the work was undertaken with the object of "illustrating the beauties" of Shakespeare. The

⁽¹⁾ The origin of the English drama, illustrated in its various species, viz. Mystery, Morality, Tragedy, and Comedy. by specimens from our earliest writings: with explanatory notes. Oxford, 1773. 3 vols.

⁽²⁾ John Wooll: Biographical Memoirs of the late Joseph Warton ... London, 1806. p.378-9

editorial contributions to the work are of little value. In the Dedicatory Note, Hawkins echoes Dodsley's words: "I pretend to no more than that of rescuing from oblivion the works of some of our ingenious ancestors, and rendering them intelligible to every reader." The preface contains an account of the early history of the drama to Shakespeare, for which Hawkins made use of Percy's essay. His own contributions show the curious results of the conflict between a mind trained to think in the classical idiom, and an alien subject which is to be analyzed. Buried among the eighteenth century comments on early literature is surely some of the worst criticism in the history of literature, because the natural inelasticity of many of the critical minds was accentuated by their training. Hawkins bemoaned the fact that the English drama followed the native rather than the classical tradition. He praised Gorboduc, saying, "Notwithstanding it's defects ... it was a model which our first dramatic writers would have done well to follow. But they aiming no higher than at present applause and present profit, were content to comply with every tasteless desire of the rude and ignorant audience, and the Common Theatres continued to exhibit Dramatic Pieces chiefly, if not altogether, of Gothic Form, very much unlike the chaste and perfect models of [classical]

Antiquity." He defended himself for drawing attention to these plays "however removed from the refinements of this polished age" on the grounds that Cicero was fond of quoting from the dramatic poets of his country. The editor's chief care was to pay the "strictest regard to virtue and morality"- a consideration which must have been somewhat cramping with such a subject. Hawkins gave individual introductions to the plays, most of the material for which was taken from Percy. The plays contained in the volumes made a great addition to the number of pre-Shakespearian plays available. Hawkins printed Candlemas Day, from the Digby MSS. at the Bodleian; Everyman (the first time this was printed in the century), from a black letter copy in the library of Lincoln cathedral; Hycke-Scorner, from the Harleian collection;; Lusty Juventus, from a copy in the Lincoln cathedral library with textual variations noted from the Harleian copy; Gammer Gurton's Needle, from a 1661 copy; Gorboduc, from the Bodleian 1571 edition; Cambises, from the Harleian copy; The Spanish Tragedy from a copy of the second edition; David and Bathsheba, from the 1599 edition; Soliman and Perseda, from the Harleian 1599 edition; Supposes, and three later plays, Satiro-Mastix, The Return from Parnassus, and Wily Bequiled. Gammer Gurton's Needle, Gorboduc, and The Spanish Tragedy had been printed before by Dodsley, but the rest were all new. Besides the

historical material Hawkins took from Percy, his debt is further evident when it is noted that he chose three of the four plays Percy had described.

With so many texts available, the time was ripe for a fuller account of the history of the beginnings of English drama. This appeared, after a fashion, in Warton's History of English Poetry published from 1744 to 1781. There is a great deal of information in Warton on the history of early drama,^① but its usefulness is greatly lessened by the unfortunate arrangement. Warton devoted no one part of his work to a treatment of the drama - he had deliberately excluded drama from his plan - but buried little bits in different sections throughout the three volumes, introducing a few pages wherever it was convenient, so that there was no connected narrative, and the reader misses all sense of consecutive history. Because of the arrangement, much information that would normally be in a bona-fide history of early drama was perforce omitted, as it could not be fitted logically into the scheme. Warton absorbed Percy's essay in his his own treatment of the subject, but he added much, and despite its drawbacks, his account was the fullest up to that

①History of English Poetry, 1st edition. Vol.I. pp.236-250; Vol. II pp. 206-209, 360-407; Vol. III. pp. 198-203, 208, 287n-293n, 321-323, 355-394, 435-437, 447-448.

time. He gave more information on the personalities connected with the drama, and more on the stage and theatres. After Warton, Percy's essay ceased to be the authority for all remarks on the subject, and Warton, summing up Percy, and adding more, took his place.

The Playhouse Pocket Companion, or Theatrical Vademecum, published in 1779, contained a short chapter From the Origin of Dramatic Poetry to the Reign of Elizabeth, which gave all the usual information, taken from FitzStephen and Stow. The author also quoted from Dugdale's Antiquities of Warwickshire for a mention of the Coventry plays^①. There was no early material in the catalogues of authors and plays which the book contained.

Growing out of the Johnson and Steevens edition of Shakespeare was a valuable collection of six early plays^② which Shakespeare had used for his sources. The interest in the plays was, of course, and still is, primarily through their connection with Shakespeare, but they also added to the number of texts illustrative of the early drama. Steevens persuaded Nichols to print the plays because they had been cited many times in the edition of Shakespeare, and he thought that they should be more easily available. They were intended

① p.16

② Six Old Plays, On Which Shakspeare Founded His Measure for Measure, Comedy of Errors, Taming the Shrew, King John, King Henry IV and King Henry V, King Lear. 2 vols.
London, 1779

as a supplement to Hawkins and were printed in the same format. There were no notes, introductions, or any editorial paraphernalia, and the texts were not collated, but were printed "without departure from the original copies". Volume one contained Promos and Cassandra, The Menaechmi, and The Taming of a Shrew; volume two contained The Troublesome Reign of K. John, The Famous Victories of Henry V, and The True Chronicle History of King Leir, and his Three Daughters Gonorill, Ragan, and Cordella. The Troublesome Reign and King Leir had been printed before,⁶⁾ but they were included in this volume for the sake of uniformity. Steevens had further plans for the republication of early plays. A letter in the Gentleman's Magazine, May 1787, announced the intended publication of four old plays in facsimile: Dido, Queen of Carthage; Common Conditions; Old Wive's Tale; and The Nice Wanton. Apparently this intention, with which Reed and Steevens had some connection, was never carried out.

Edmund Malone's contributions to the study of early drama also sprang from his Shakespearian research. His first study of any length appeared in the Supplement to the Edition of Shakespeare's Plays, Published in 1778, which was published in 1780, just in time for Warton to draw on it for his third

⁶⁾ Both were printed by Steevens in his edition of Shakespeare quartos, and The Troublesome Reign in Bowle's Miscellaneous Pieces.

volume, printed the year following. It was a 78 page essay, printed as an addition to a note of Steevens. The essay contained no history of the drama and no discussion of early plays, but was concerned solely with a description of the theatres and theatrical production in the early days of the drama - what the eighteenth century called the "oeconomy" of the theatre. Very little had been done on this subject up to now. Dodsley had given a few details and Percy had included a paragraph in the first edition of his essay, enlarging it in subsequent editions; Warton had supplemented Percy's material with new information, but much of it was contained in the third volume, published after Malone.

Malone's 1780 essay was elaborated and made more useful when it was published in his 1790 edition of Shakespeare. It became, there, An Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of the English Stage, and of the Economy and Usages of our Ancient Theatres. The 78 pages of the earlier version were now expanded to 350 pages, with an account of the drama added, but the interest and value of the article still lay in its discussion of Elizabethan and pre-Elizabethan stage conditions. Malone's notes on the drama itself were surprisingly poor; the account of the plays was cursory and second-hand, adding practically nothing to Percy and Warton. Malone himself seemed to realize the low quality of his work here, and

excused it by saying that he considered a minute investigation of the origin and progress of the drama in England not worth the trouble.

The last decade of the century saw many works partly devoted to the early history of the drama, but no scholarly work on the plane of Malone's essay appeared. The decade was barren of editions of early texts with the exception of one. The text of the York Miracle, The Incredulity of Thomas, was published from the Sykes MS. by John Croft in his Excerpta Antiqua,⁽¹⁾ a miscellaneous collection of reprints from manuscripts, chiefly of historical interest. There were no notes or editorial material beyond the bare reproduction of the text of the play, which Croft called "A Pageant Play, copied from an Original MSS. amongst the Archives at Guildhall, York".

A Theatrical Dictionary ... published in 1792, was one of the numerous compendiums following the plan of the Companion to the Playhouse. It contained an "Account of all the Plays that have appeared from the Commencement of Theatrical Exhibition to the present Time",⁽²⁾ in which the earliest plays mentioned are those of Bale and Heywood. The "Short Sketch of the Rise and Progress of English Stage",⁽³⁾

⁽¹⁾ J. Croft: Excerpta Antiqua; or, A collection of original manuscripts. York, 1797. pp.105-110

⁽²⁾ p. I-339

⁽³⁾ p. 382-400

eighteen pages long, was taken wholly from Dodsley even to phraseology. The next year, 1793, A Complete History of the Drama, from the Earliest Periods to the Present Time ..., by "Censor Dramaticus" copied its predecessor in a short four page account of the Mysteries.⁽¹⁾ Again the phraseology is similar. Roach's New and Complete History of the Stage, published in 1796, was another work destined for the popular audience. The short twelve page chapter on the "Origin of the Stage - their Scenes and Decorations -- the Interludes, Masques, Mysteries, Moralities and Ludi" combined Dodsley's account with some material from Warton. A Compendious History of the English Stage (1800) by a number of writers, including Waldron and Dibdin, had a short mention of the usual details, and included nothing new. Charles Dibdin's prodigious work A Complete History of the English Stage, also published in 1800, contained a 181 page chapter on the English stage to Shakespeare's first play.⁽²⁾ The section contains much valuable material, but it is spoiled by the excessive thoroughness of the author, who gave a long discussion of the Druids before he reached the subject. Buried under a great deal of irrelevant material, was a good summary of all the available information on early English drama. The number of works on

⁽¹⁾ p.120-123

⁽²⁾ Vol.II, Book IV. p.214-400

the history of the stage published in the last decade of the eighteenth century cannot be taken as indicating a popular interest in pre-Shakespearian drama. The general stage histories usually had some details on early drama, but none of them contributed anything new; most of them were content to copy Dodsley's material, without acknowledgment.

We cannot close this section by leaving the study of early drama in safe hands, its dangerous days over, and its future comfortably assured. Malone's attitude - that a careful study of the old plays was not worth while - was by no means heretical then. The editor of the 1813 edition of Dodsley could say "... the vacuum in this species of English literature is yet very imperfectly filled up."^① Nevertheless, the eighteenth century had begun the task: it had supplied a number of texts of early plays, though it had far from exhausted the field, and it had assembled an historical and critical literature concerning the rise of the drama.

①Dodsley: 1813 edition. VI.xxi

Chronological List of Works Illustrating the Study
of Early English Drama from 1744 to 1800

1744. Dodsley, Robert, ed. A Select Collection of Old Plays. London, 1744. 12 vols.
1750. Hippisley [?]. A Dissertation on Comedy: in which the rise and progress of that species of drama is particularly considered and deduc'd from the earliest to the present age. By a student of Oxford. London, 1750. [Not consulted. Title from R.W.Lowe. A Bibliographical Account of English Theatrical Literature.]
1751. Betson, A. Miscellaneous dissertations historical, critical, and moral, on the origin and antiquity of masquerades, plays, poetry, &c. With an enquiry into the antiquity of Free Masonry, and several other old heathenish customs. As also, whether plays conduce more to the improvement or corruption of morals: which is most excellent, a poem in rhyme or in blank verse; and finally, what spirit introduced masquerades originally into the world. With several other curious enquiries. London, [1751].
1764. The Companion to the Playhouse: or, An historical account of all the dramatic writers (and their works) that have appeared in Great Britain and Ireland, from the commencement of our theatrical exhibitions, down to the present year 1764. 2 vols. London, 1764.
- Bowle, John, ed. Miscellaneous Pieces of Antient English Poesie, viz. The Troublesome Raigne of King John, written by Shkespeare, extant in no edition of his writings. The Metamorphosis of Pygmalion's Image, and certain Satyres. By John Marston. The Scourge of Villanie. By the same. All printed before the year 1600. London, 1764.
1765. Percy, Thomas. On the Origin of the English Stage &c. [In Reliques of Ancient English Poetry... London, 1765].
1766. Steevens, George, ed. Twenty of the Plays of Shakespeare, being the whole number printed in quarto during his life-time, or before the Restoration, collated where there were different copies, and published from the originals. 4 vols. London, 1766. [Contains some pre-Shakespearian texts].

1773. Hawkins, Thomas, ed. The Origin of the English Drama, illustrated in its various *species*, viz. Mystery, Morality, Tragedy, and Comedy, by specimens from our earliest writings: with explanatory notes. 3 vols. Oxford, 1773.
1774. Warton, Thomas. The History of English Poetry from the close of the eleventh century to the commencement of the eighteenth century. 3 vols. London, 1774-1781.
1779. The Playhouse Pocket Companion, or Theatrical Vademecum: containing, I. A catalogue of all the dramatic authors who have written for the English stage, with a list of their works, shewing the dates of representation or publication. II. A catalogue of anonymous pieces. III. An index of plays and authors. In a method entirely new, whereby the author of any dramatic performance, and the time of its appearance, may be readily discovered on inspection. To which is prefixed, a critical history of the English stage from its origin to the present time; with an enquiry into the causes of the decline of dramatic poetry in England. London, 1779.
- Steevens, George, ed. Six Old Plays, on which Shakespeare founded his Measure for Measure. Comedy of Errors. Taming the Shrew. King John. K. Henry IV & K. Henry V. King Lear. 2 vols. London, 1779.
1780. Dodsley, Robert, ed. A Select Collection of Old Plays. In twelve volumes. The second edition, corrected and collated with the old copies, with notes critical and explanatory. 12 vols. London, 1780. [Ed. by Isaac Reed]
1780. Malone, Edmund. Supplement to the Edition of Shakespeare's Plays Published in 1778. London, 1780. [Contains an untitled essay on the early history of the stage]
1782. Baker, David Erskine. Biographia Dramatica, or, A companion to the playhouse: containing historical and critical memoirs, and original anecdotes, of British and Irish dramatic writers, from the commencement of our theatrical exhibitions; amongst whom are some of the most celebrated actors. Also an alphabetical account of their works, the dates when printed, and occasional observations on their merits. Together with an introductory view of the rise and progress of the British stage. A new edition: carefully corrected; greatly enlarged; and continued from 1764 to 1782. 2 vols. London, 1782.

1788. Egerton, T. and J. The Theatrical remembrancer, son-
taining a complete list of all the dramatic performances
in the English language; their several editions, dates,
and sizes, and the theatres where they were originally
performed: together with an account of those which
have been acted and are unpublished, and a catalogue
of such Latin plays as have been written by English
authors, from the earliest production of the English
drama to the end of the year 1787. To which are added
Notitia Dramatica, being a chronological account of
events relative to the English stage. London, 1788.
[Not consulted. Title from Lowe]
1789. Brand, John. The History and Antiquities of the town
and county of the town of Newcastle upon Tyne ...
2 vols. London, 1789. [Contains the text of the
Newcastle Noah's Ark Miracle and information on the
Miracle plays given in that town.]
1790. Malone, Edmund. An Historical Account of the rise and
progress of the English stage, and of the economy and
usages of our ancient theatres. [In The Plays and
Poems of William Shakspeare. London, 1790. vol.I, pt.2]
1792. A new theatrical dictionary. Containing an account of all
the dramatic pieces that have appeared from the commence-
ment of theatrical exhibitions to the present time. To-
gether with their dates when written or printed, where
acted, and occasional remarks on their merits and
success. To which is added. An alphabetical catalogue
of dramatic writers, with the titles of all the pieces
they have written, annexed to each name. And also a
short sketch of the rise and progress of the English
stage. London, 1792.
1793. Percy, Thomas. An Essay on the origin of the English
stage, particularly on the historical plays of
Shakespeare. 1793. [Reprinted from the Reliques, 1767,
with a few enlargements and alterations]
- Censor Dramaticus. A Complete History of the Drama, from
the earliest periods to the present time. London, 1793.
1796. Roach, J. Roach's New and Complete History of the Stage,
from its origin to its present stage, including all the
entertaining anecdotes of London, Dublin, and Edinburgh. &c
Recorded by our most eminent historians, viz. Strutt
Stowe Cibber Langbrow Tildon Chetwood Carew Dodsley
Baker Malone Stevens Victor Oulton &c. Intended as a
companion to Roach's Authentic Memoirs of the Green
Room. London, 1796.

1797. Croft, John, ed. Excerpta Antiqua; or, A collection of original manuscripts. York, 1797. [Contains text of the York Miracle, Incendulity of Thomas. p.105-110.]
1800. Waldron, F.G., ed. A Compendious History of the English Stage, from the earliest period to the present time. Containing a candid analysis of all dramatic writings, and a liberal and impartial criticism on the merits of theatrical performances, and a sketch of the lives of such as have been eminent on their profession. By Waldron, Dⁱbⁱbdin, &c. London, 1800.
- Dibdin, Charles. A Complete History of the English Stage. Introduced by a comparative and comprehensive review of the Asiatic, the Grecian, the Roman, the Spanish, the Italian, the Portuguese, the German, the French, and other theatres, and involving biographical tracts and anecdotes, instructive and amusing, concerning a prodigious number of authors, composers, painters, actors, singers, & patrons of dramatic productions in all countries. The whole written with the assistance of interesting documents, collected in the course of five and thirty years. 5 vols. London, 1800